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BY

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AUTHOR OF "TAPER LIGHTS"

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DEDICATED TO

John Bull and Brother Jonathan,

WITH THE HEARTY HOPE THAT THEY WILL
ALWAYS BE AS FRIENDLY AS THE BEST
REPRESENTATIVES OF ENGLAND AND
AMERICA ALWAYS HAVE BEEN

PREFACE

THE elect reviewer will pardon me if I take this opportunity to remind another class of reviewers that it is the privilege of the essayist to make his themes as varied as he chooses. If his essays are all literary or all anything, the chances are that his readers will be bored. He may be bored in any case; but if the themes are widely varied, the chances are that he will not be bored so long in one spot.

This caveat is filed for the benefit of those misguided people who conceive of the word "desultory" as applicable to any collection of sketches, stories, or essays which are not all on kindred themes. With such an interpretation of the word, one might use it with equal fitness of the Bible, Shakespeare, and of life itself, which is the most miscellaneous volume we have, and the most suggestive.

E. B. S.

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ONE of these essays—*just one, dear reviewer* (the one on Ruskin)—appeared in the *New York Times Saturday Review,* to which I make acknowledgments for courteous permission to reprint.

E. B. S.

THE ROOT AND FOLIAGE OF STYLE

THE daisy cannot tell us what the rose has to say, neither can the leaf-dancing poplar translate the message of the giant Sequoia, whose language is sublimity. For style is the individual efflorescence of the soul, and the difference in form, texture, and perfume between the petals of the million blossoms which deck the earth is not greater and more varied than the verbal differences petalled forth by the souls of men.

Despite the obvious nature of these facts, one frequently encounters statements, from accredited authorities, which imply that style is a kind of intellectual ping-pong, which any one, however devoid of ideas, may master by taking lessons. The envious dull-wit has gone farther, using the depre-

catory phrase, "slinging words," to convey the impression that style is a superficial accomplishment, in which he, the man whose thoughts deliver like cold molasses, would scorn to be proficient.

That there are people who sling words no one will deny. But they are of two distinct classes: those whose words are like inflated currency, because there is behind them no bullion of thought and feeling; and those whose words ring true because they are genuine counters of thoughts and emotion. But these distinctions do not exist for the critic who scorns the slinger of words. To him the greatest thinker that ever lived, and the cheap orator whose periods are full of sound and fury, signifying nothing, are in the same category. They are both slingers of words and therefore deserving of contempt.

Undeniably, the greatest slinger of words of whom we have any record was Shakes-

peare. But how inept and inadequate so to describe a man whose brain teemed with ideas and fancies as the ocean teems with living creatures. In his case, above all others, the style is the man, and to speak of his vocabulary as an asset apart from his thought and feeling, is much like trying to define the grandeur of a forest in terms of board measure, or measuring the sublimity of the ocean by a computation of the number of tons of salt contained in it.

It is because people forget that the style is the man that one hears so much loose criticism on this subject. To the same cause may be traced such remarks as: "*I* could have wrote books, if I had taken lessons in composition,"—a remark made by a good woman, as destitute of ideas and imagination as the observation indicates. Yet no explanation could have made it clear to her that all the teachers and all the rhetorics of the ages could not have added one cubit to

her native intellectual and emotional stature. To her writing would forever signify an intellectual *léger-de-main,* that could be taught like fencing.

Can one imagine Shakespeare, Burns, or Lincoln, saying: "I could have written books, if I had taken lessons"? Or, can one hear a beech-tree sighing: "I might have been a Sequoia, if some one had only hoed and watered my roots daily"?

One would not too abruptly lift the illusions of any one, but as Emerson has observed, "truth is sad," and sooner or later the most deluded writer must admit that the Mississippi is the Mississippi, not because it has taken lessons in fluminous rhetoric, but because of the volume of its waters, whose mighty rush must speak the language of sublimity and no other. Diminish the volume of the Mississippi to a tiny stream, and the roar of its waters becomes the placid murmur of a babbling brook.

The same difference of intellectual and emotional volume is the cause which gives or takes away the accent of greatness in literature or in life. The Mississippi cannot be made from the contents of a pint-cup, nor Mont Blanc from a few wagon-loads of earth, cobblestones, and snowflakes.

These simple reasons explain why there has never been any danger that the Niagaras, Mont Blancs, and Amazons of literature would outnumber those with which nature glorifies her landscapes. In this reflection, moreover, the philosophical reader should find comfort only; since Niagaras, Mont Blancs, and Amazons would lose their charm were they lavishly and indefinitely multiplied over the face of the earth. On the same principle, a lack of wisdom is displayed in the lament that we shall never have another Shakespeare.

Pray what would be the use of another Shakespeare? But while it is absolutely

certain that we shall never have another one, since Nature loves diversity better than a duplicate of her very best, we have every reason to expect that some day there may be some one still greater, though it may take as many years to bring him forth as were the necessary prelude to Shakespeare himself.

These speculations, however, lead into the grassy byways of fancy, diverging from the main thoroughfares of our subject. Yet the docile reader should always be willing to be lured down any side lane of reflection, should a clump of fancy's wayside blossoms, or a mental bobolink, invite. For the blossom or bobolink may give us hints not to be gathered from the most erudite traveller along the grand highway. In proof whereof, let him ask Signor Bobolink what he would consider a good style in singing, and would he not answer: "Spink, spank, spink, is what I truly think"? which being inter-

preted with its logical context would read: "A good style is first of all the natural style of the singer or writer, be it the cheerful spink, spank, spink of the bobolink, Holmes and Lowell, or the pensive woodland strain of the hermit thrush and Whittier."

Yet soft, my dear Mr. Bobolink; in days not wholly gone by, your heterodox views would have met with scant approval among some of the knights of the Blue Pencil. Could you have sent them a translation of some of your musical vagaries the chances are that you would have received them back with a criticism something like this:

My dear Mr. Bobolink:—

While we find your ideas sound and fresh, their expression seems to us not dignified enough for an organ like ours. What our readers want is something in a plain sparrow-chirp or chickadee style. If you think it worth your while to delete the spink, spank, spink

passages in your contribution and rewrite them in chickadeeish, we may be able to work in your paper between some of the more solid articles of our next issue. Very truly,

Editor of *Hay and Stubble.*

Possibly, if the dandelion and sunflower could review the petalled poetry of the iris, they would say: "While we do not object to the hue of your stalk, we do not consider your corolla in good form or colour. A corolla should be round like ours, and yellow. Neither do we consider the elaborate markings on your petals in good taste; they have a self-conscious air. Petals should be perfectly plain like ours and the daisy's, though that blossom lacks vitality."

But the iris will continue to bloom with petals pencilled as Nature designed them, and the author who is equally obedient to the divine tutelage of Nature, will allow his thoughts and feelings to blossom like the

iris, from inner compulsion, in accordance with the old maxim, "Look in thy heart and write." For having something to say—having so much that the very pressure of its volume makes you say it,—and saying it as Nature intended you to say it, are the first two conditions of a good style. Like the swelling seed that bursts its dry, hard covering and pushes up through the heaviest sod to find its full expression in more or less beautiful leaves and blossoms, a live idea, quickened by any emotion, germinates, sends its roots downward into the soil of experience, and pushing up through the surface of consciousness, finds the rhetorical foliage and blossoms suited to its nature.

And this germination of a thought-seed in the brain or heart and its later verbal foliation and efflorescence outside the brain on white paper, where others may see it as a plant is seen, is one of the most marvellous

of the everyday miracles at which we have ceased to wonder.

Following the analogy of germination in nature in the realm of literature, it would seem that if any rules for a good style could be given, they would begin with the injunction: First be sure you have some seed before you attempt to make a literary garden.

And of literary seeds there are as many as those known to the horticulturist: seeds of sublimity, humour, wit, pathos, and of all the bright-hued flowers that blossom in the pied meadows of fancy and imagination. Rarest, perhaps, of all is the seed of sublimity, which can germinate only in a soul capable of responding to those higher appeals of nature, which for one blessed moment lift a man out of the fettering consciousness of his temporal limitations into a thrilling sense of oneness with things eternal.

Though the degree of responsiveness to

any manifestation of sublimity varies in different people from zero to infinity, there are few men or women who are entirely deaf to these celestial overtones. But some of us are like an organist who never pulls out his diapason stops or octave coupler.

Millions of people may have, and have had, free orchestra seats at the spectacle of the Universe, but how many have matched that cosmic reporter of the Scriptures who exclaimed, "The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth his handiwork"?

Millions of people, too, have looked at Mont Blanc with more or less responsiveness, but how many beside Coleridge have adequately caught and transcribed the grand refrain of its white majesty, silently challenging the centuries?

The ocean, too, surpassing the mountain in its double appeal to ear and eye, has found hardly a poet, beside Byron, who has wor-

thily celebrated the fathomless and perennial mystery of its moods and colours.

Probably much more than the world suspects has the increase of business and city life encroached upon the virgin lands of wonder. Drawn to the cities by the strong centripetal force which only now and then a man like Thoreau can resist, authors and poets have resigned even the stars to the dry mathematical ministrations of astronomers. And although the heavens go on declaring the glory of God as they did in the days of old, their high declaration is well-nigh drowned out by the ceaseless roar of the human tide of a great city. Reading a poem like Richard Realf's "Symbolisms," one does not need to ask whether it was composed to an accompaniment of elevated railways and cable-cars, or to the "murmuring pines and the hemlock," for the poet's muse proclaims herself behind these stanzas, as a dew-bathed daughter of the Great Open:

The Root and Foliage of Style

"O earth, thou hast not any wind that blows
Which is not music; every weed of thine
Pressed rightly flows in aromatic wine.

. . . . .

All shapes and sounds have something which is not
Of them: a spirit broods amid the grass;
Vague outlines of the Everlasting Thought
Lie in the melting shadows as they pass;
The touch of the Eternal presence thrills
The fringes of the sunsets and the hills.

. . . . .

Apocalyptic intimations stray
Across the rifts of matter;

. . . . .

Wherefore, albeit we may not fully guess
The meaning of the wonder, let us keep
Clean channels for the instincts that respond
To the Unutterable sanctities that sweep
Down the far reaches of the strange Beyond."

Though so few authors have been able to catch apocalyptic intimations, the present hour is full of hope, for every publisher's list echoes the cry: "I will arise and go to my mother, Nature, who has pastures enough and to spare." So we may confidently look for a day when more of those who think and feel will learn to understand and speak our great mother tongue, whose alpha-

bet is ciphered on every flower-illumined page of Nature's book.

In the interests of human progress, however, it may be fortunate that literature, as a whole, has given precedence in time and number to examples of the sublime as it manifests itself in the great qualities of character, rather than to more æsthetic illustrations less vitally connected with conduct.

Between these two manifestations of sublimity, there is a touch of the same difference that exists between an apparently idle group of clouds, promenading the heavens in celestial full-dress, and the same clouds in the terrestrial négligé they wear while bathing the grimy earth.

Yet this figure, like many others, cannot be pressed. For Nature is such a subtle alchemist that one never knows what kind of an endless chain of results may be started by giving the right kind of man the right kind of thrill. Bringing about a meeting

between a poet or a painter and a convincing sunset, thrifty Nature may preserve for countless generations all the finest effects of that particular sunset, while she goes on experimenting with others.

Again, by giving another man the bifocal gift of humour, she not only achieves a pungent difference in styles but commands a psychological sunrise which dispels the clouds of gloom. To this end we have authors — great-grandsons of Prometheus — who can fan up the cold, grey ashes of fact and, by simply dropping on a few sticks of any kind of literary fuel and pouring over them the tincture of wit and the oil of humour, make a cosey, crackling fire, where one may warm his hands and wonder why it is that one man's fire burns while he is musing and another's goes out.

Then by varying her gift of humour as she varies the contours of her millions of leaves, Nature induces an endless variety of

chuckles and smiles between the grotesquely delightful wit of those much-quoted stanzas on our President,

> "His sword within its scabbard sleeps,
> But mercy! how it snores!"

and the delicately lambent flash of Dr. Crothers's epigram: "My Lady Ignorance is gracious and often bestows her choicest gifts on those who scorn her."

Another method by which Nature assists literary variety is to leave in some men's minds a larger peep-hole than in others between the perception of the actual and the possible, the real and the ideal, and the result is what is known as imaginative writing. Then, after her usual custom, she varies the size of this peep-hole and its point of compass, giving a world of variations between the perspectives of Milton and Poe, Shakespeare and Stockton.

It should thus be evident that Nature alone is responsible for all the great funda-

mental differences in styles, as she is responsible for the varying colours and flavours of the strawberry and plum, or the different perfumes of carnations and violets. With the same passion for diversity that makes her create a Burbank, still further to assist her infinite variety, she herself keeps up a process of cross-fertilisation which produces in literature new angles of vision, new flavours of humour, and a fresh use of the tired old dictionary, which gets done up into little dried bouquets of faded phrases, nouns, and adjectives, verbs and adverbs, with which the mantels of literature are adorned. But just as one is beginning to feel that some one ought to do some literary housecleaning, an author like Mrs. Wharton appears and takes down from their figurative mantels some of the dried bouquets of literary grasses and substitutes for them the fresh and fragrant blossoms that grow in the bosky Ardens of fancy and wonder. "I

met her," says one of Mrs. Wharton's heroes; "it was like finding the climate in which I was meant to live." Again, the spiritual persistence of one of her heroines is thus epitomised: "I had never before known how completely the dead may survive."

Assisting the same end is the refreshing felicity of expression which marks the work of O. Henry, who delicately mentions the habit some women have of carrying their money in "The Ladies' Department of the Old Domestic Lisle Thread Bank."

These little differences may seem but superficial literary distinctions, but they have their roots in the larger differences that separate the discriminating and the undiscriminating, the blind and those who see. Even the trees find it expedient and necessary to change their clothes once a year and their colour several times. After serving for centuries as the small change of literature, the best of maxims, definitions, and

epigrams get defaced and need to be reminted and stamped with a fresh device. And this reminting, as well as the original coining, is the especial province of the humourist, who is always one who perceives the difference between the "little more and the little less" that are such worlds away.

"Nothing matters" is the old proverb; "nothing matters, but that is just what matters" is the reminted coin by our brilliant contemporary essayist, Mr. Benjamin De Casseres. Again, a badly-punched piece of literary currency goes to Dr. Crothers's rhetorical mint and is reissued with this piquant superscription, "A noun is known by the adjective it keeps."

Even an immortal maxim of Shakespeare's has been tampered with to good purpose:

"Who steals my purse steals trash; 'tis something, nothing;
But he that filches from me my good name,
Robs me of something that I never had."

The Root and Foliage of Style

In addition to all the congenital gifts by which Nature revitalises the pages of literature, she doubly insures this end by the various grafts which time and change make upon every man's native stock: notably, by the experience technically known as "the grand passion." For there are many authors of the kind described by John Morley, in whom "the elements of character remained mute, futile, and dispersive particles until compelled into unity by the creative shock of feminine influence." By a parallel deduction, George Eliot, without George Henry Lewes, might have been merely Mary Ann Evans, with an undeveloped potentiality. And Browning, as a bachelor, with unanointed eyes, might have been an author in whose works there would have been even more dispersive particles than there now are.

Not only love, but grief, forces the crimson tide of feeling to the farthest shores

of thought, sometimes making poets of men and women, who, for nearly a lifetime, have maintained a most exemplary abstinence from verse. And real grief, as a poet-maker, evinces a rhetorical infallibility that no higher critic can assail. For all strong emotion is self-authenticating and lops verbiage, till the throb of the writer's heart beats the rhythm of his measures. This is most beautifully illustrated in the little epitaph, written by Robert Richardson:

> "Warm summer sun,
> Shine kindly here.
> Warm southern wind,
> Blow softly here.
> Green sod above,
> Lie light, lie light,
> Good-night, dear heart,
> Good-night, good-night."

By the same sure token, we know the cry, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee; O Absalom, my son, my son!" to be a genuine cry of anguish from the heart of Israel's

king. Not less certain are we of the feeling which inspired this little stanza taken from a recent volume of poems by Mr. Ernest Dowson:

"When I am old
And sadly steal apart,
Into the dark and cold,
Friend of my heart!
Remember, if you can,
Not him who lingers, but that other man,
Who loved and sang, and had a beating heart—
When I am old!"

Equally marked is the pruning effect of every other strong emotion, like patriotism, scorn, indignation, and the sense of the sublime. Such are the stimuli behind the bare beauty of "Crossing the Bar," the classic strength of "The Man with the Hoe," and Lincoln's "Gettysburg Address." A strong religious sentiment—which is closely akin to the sense of sublimity—has also inspired some of the most beautiful lines in literature. "Lead, Kindly Light" was the

result of no painful conning of rhetorical rules, but blossomed in response to celestial influences as the rose blossoms under the warm and gentle compulsion of the sun. The same source of inspiration is plainly obvious in many of the finest poems of Dr. Arthur Eaton, notably in the following stanza:

> "We hear thy heartbeats in the shade
> And silence of the forest dim,
> Thou art in all the flowers that braid
> With blue and gold the river's brim."

So might one go on, giving from the literatures of every age and clime examples which prove that as the sun is the great quickening influence that touches the dull, brown earth till it is eloquent in the poetry of grass and flowers, so feeling, quickening the sometimes sodden mould of consciousness, awakens its dormant roots and seeds till they put forth the leaves and blossoms of literature.

Go and learn to feel, then, might well be sound rhetorical advice to a man or a woman who would invoke the Angel of the Inky Way. Or, metaphorically stated, to every drop of ink you use, add one bright drop from your own arteries.

And to feel, one must be able to see, not merely with the organs of physical vision, but with that more sensitively constructed lens known as "the inner eye," which many people use so little that its delicate nerves become atrophied. But when the inner eye is kept open, it not only reports the spiritual vistas that are its own peculiar garnering, but also lends of its finer apprehension to all the other senses. One might, indeed, define the inner eye as the organ which refines and elaborates all the other senses.

So the ear that hears the tidal beat of the ocean may also catch in its rhythm the throbbing pulse of eternity itself; and the sense that captures the perfume of the flowers,

along with its physical apprehension, may capture a secondary fragrance, which is a palpable emanation from the mind of the Almighty. To the sense of touch, also, its spiritual increments are its finest fruition. From a Peter Bell perspective, a handclasp is itself and nothing more; but the assisted sense of feeling may receive through its fine telepathy a communication divinely transmitted to the hearts of mankind, through the circuit of the ages.

Though the capacity of spiritual extension, which belongs to each of the senses, is undeniably conditioned, at birth, in the individual, some people do not cultivate the vast arable tract which their souls possess. Like many owners of large estates, they spend most of their time on the little roofed-in section where they eat and sleep, with only now and then a hurried scamper on horseback over the woodlands and hills from which their strength might come but does

not. If you would get sweet strains from an Æolian harp, you must place it where the winds of heaven can play their airs upon it. And if you would voice the music within you, you must lay off the blinders of those who immure themselves in houses till your soul can chant:

> Upon the spirit strings of me
> Let the wind play and the sea,—
> The golden clouds and shadows grey
> And the white starlight,
> Ethereal child of day.

And the kind of melody that is played upon the spirit strings, depends upon the way one keeps his instrument tuned. The airs of heaven obey the law of celestial gravitation. As surely as the devil pipes to his own, so surely will the spirit of truth and purity open channels only to those who keep pure cisterns of thought and feeling. It was not by accident that Emerson was the chosen luciduct when the Over-Soul would give to the world a somewhat more articu-

late revelation of his presence than is written in "The light of setting suns, and the round ocean and the living air."

For Emerson most notably exemplified his own precept: "When a man lives with God, his voice shall be as sweet as the murmur of the brook and the rustle of the corn."

Thus, again, by another chain of sequences, we reach the inevitable conclusion that the style is the man; so that any rhetorical prescription which would go deeper than a mere inspection of verbal symptoms must consider the heart, out of which are the issues not only of life but of literature.

Yet this conclusion gives no ground for the inference that all literature should be written to a pipe-organ accompaniment. The author with a well-tuned soul will use it as a good pianist uses his instrument—now making use of the soft or heavy pedals, low notes and high, and all the hundred

shades of musical expression which lie between the strongest crescendo and the lightest diminuendo. For the reading public gladly recognises in literature a place for almost anything which can make one for itself, from the lightest tintinnabulations of wit and fancy to the deepest tollings of pathos and tragedy.

Yet nature knows that for one singer or story-teller who can keep the strings of our emotions taut, we need scores who can unstring them; hence, the judicious proportion of Mark Twains and Dooleys to Ibsens which is meted out to us from generation to generation. Hence, also, the justification of the soft-pedalled poet—commonly designated as "minor," since it is not always that the soul of man can vibrate to the pitch of a poem like "Intimations of Immortality." After human nature has responded to its reveilles, it must also have its lullabies.

So to literature, as a whole, each author

is a kind of musical stop, adding volume, or varying the quality of the tone. And in a lesser way, the different moods of every author are his stops and pedals, and should be most carefully manipulated. Or, to vary the figure, every well-appointed mind should have several changes of rhetorical raiment for divers occasions, including a dressing-gown-and-slippers diction, for intimate tête-à-têtes, an evening-dress vocabulary for more elaborate functions, as well as a comfortable number of tidy intellectual tweeds for every-day wear.

One sometimes feels, even in reading the classics, that a character is made to appear in a rhetorical dress-coat, when the occasion calls for nothing more elaborate than a business suit. It may seem almost like literary *lèse majesté* to illustrate this point from Shakespeare, but as Emerson has asked,

> "Why should the vest on him allure,
> Which I could not on me endure?"

In real life, would a man in a financially Petersome condition, broach the subject to his best friend in this wise?

> "'Tis not unknown to you, Antonio,
> How much I have disabled mine estate,
> By something showing a more swelling port
> Than my faint means would grant continuance:
> Nor do I now make moan to be abridged
> From such a noble rate: but my chief care
> Is to come fairly off from the great debt
> Wherein my time, something too prodigal,
> Hath left me gauged."

An example of the other rhetorical extreme is a veracious remark (flash-lighting the woman in the style) made by a country maid whose father was killed by falling off from a load of hay. "When they took him up," narrated this plain, blunt damsel, "he was dead as a smelt," a *résumé* of the situation which recalls the fearfully unexpected declivity in the famous couplet,

> "Perhaps it was right to dissemble your love,
> But why did you kick me downstairs?"

Finally, in addition to all the radical modi-

fications of style, effected by the causes already enumerated, there is yet another, wrought by stealthy-fingered Time. As the normal child skips, jumps, and sings along his way, so the mind has its skipping and singing epochs, when its natural exuberance cannot keep the sedate treadmill pace into which it may naturally fall in later years.

This fact the stern-browed critic should not overlook, nor too austerely frown upon the restive author, who sometimes vaults obstructing fences between him and his literary goal. Let the gambolling author caper while he may, or make literary snowballs, jack-o'-lanterns, or birch whistles, as he trudges along the stony paths that lead to the Parnassian Way. For all too soon, perchance, his literary gambols, which have added so much to the gaiety of nations, will sober down to the measured tread of a dignified dealer in platitudes, or, worse still, into the gouty hobble of a pessimist.

The Root and Foliage of Style

Not that such a sequel is the universal destiny which time has up his sleeve for authors. For to some he brings a gain for every loss, compensating for the passing Springtime perfume of the apple blossom in the autumnal fragrance of the mellow fruit. The first gorgeous pageantry of Fall is likewise succeeded by a soothing aftermath of colour, which lingers in the dry leaves of birch, beech, and oak, and the russet-brown of frost-burnt ferns; and an author's style may also have its Indian summer aftermath of colour, when the sap of its green leaf is dry and its first autumnal colouring has faded away.

WHEN STEEL STRIKES PUNK

Our critics have often been chided as dealers in cheap literary unguents, and the censure is deserved when there is an apotheosis of weary and unprofitable platitudes. But there is another phase of criticism almost as dangerous as the flabby and obsequious adulation of writing which is neither creative, suggestive, nor inspiring. I refer to the type of criticism which Miss Sinclair has so accurately portrayed, at its worst, in the history of Horace Jewdwine. While jealousy, dishonesty, and truculence were the chief factors in the case developed by Miss Sinclair, there are all kinds of variations of Jewdwinism, whose diversity is produced by varying the percentage of each quality which goes to make up a Jewdwine; or by adding a mental incapacity, whose

possession might have palliated Jewdwine's offence.

That it is mental incapacity, rather than any moral obliquity, which is the cause of the larger part of incompetent criticism in America, it is semi-comforting to believe. How else explain the purely impersonal libels that are daily flaunted against our literature? Over and over we are told that "nothing is at present being done in American literature," despite the fact that there is a host of new writers, at the present moment, who are doing uncommonly fine and promising work.

These wholesale detractions, moreover, inflate their currency by what is known as "a consensus of opinion,"—a consensus often obtained in this fashion: an ill-advised criticism is repeated, till it is multiplied by a thousand mouths, when it is no more a consensus than the "I think" of a henpecked husband is any indication of anything that originated in his own grey matter.

When Steel Strikes Punk

There is another reason, also, why Americans are likely to be lacking in appreciation of the work that is being done at their very elbows. When such an army of writers are issuing books, one is in danger of missing the tree on account of the woods. Often when I have heard well-read people making a casual enumeration of books that were worth while, they would discover, on subsequent reflection, that a dozen or more had been omitted simply because the memory failed to deliver when a sight-draft was made upon it.

But there are other critics of our literature who are related to the

"Idiot who praises in enthusiastic tone
All centuries but this, every country but his own."

a class justly scored by Emerson, when he said that "those Americans, who after a brief sojourn in Paris or Berlin can see nothing to

admire in their own country, may well be spared to go back to those cities."

I have personally known just such an American, uneducated at three universities, and possessed of the spacious contempt for his own country's literature which only a thoroughgoing ignorance of it can inspire. And from this source came the most caustic pronouncements, although the critic had read next to nothing of the literary output of the last thirty years and very little of the fifty preceding. Yet his verdicts were rendered in the *ex cathedra* tone of one fully misinformed on his subject.

Though one recognises its futility, one cannot help suggesting to such malcontents, that they should make as thorough a study of American authors, past and present, as they would if studying English literature at its small end, when the most dreary specimens of mediocrity are frequently approached with irrelevant awe. Really, why

should one "dote on the distant" to the exclusion of justice and reason? If we admit the superiority of the electric light over the tallow candle, why deny the possibility of improvement in every other line?

One can more easily pardon the attitude of condescension on the part of the foreigner, who quite naturally knows more of his own literature than of ours.

Bare geographical distance does count as a barrier to the perfect understanding which casteth out prejudice. Our good cousin, *né* Bull, who really has a hearty, friendly desire to like us and our literature, even to this day is embarrassed by a preconceived notion that American literature must possess a wild and prickly flavour, suggesting the uplifted tomahawk and a rustic civilisation where the bison or buffalo may be expected at any moment to break through the garden hedge.

Failing to discover this unmixed flavour of rusticity in Emerson, Hawthorne, Thoreau, Lowell, and many other representatives of our classic epoch, an occasional Englishman has suffered the cruel disappointment of one who is hunting for a wild-eyed lynx and suddenly comes upon a domesticated Angora cat. For few foreigners have grasped the fact that what is really "distinctively American" is not the rugged and inchoate utterance of Whitman at his worst, nor the high local colour of Bret Harte, but the possibility of the existence not only of such types but of hundreds of others between them and the works of Emerson and Poe.

But, as before intimated, myopic conclusions may be condoned in one focussing on objects two or three thousand miles away. On the same ground one can forgive such inaccuracies as occur in the essays of an author usually so discriminating as Mrs. Meynell, who calmly tells her readers that America

has had "only one man of letters"—Lowell. Attention is called to this erroneous statement not because of any international sensitiveness, but because it is the duty of every literary Samaritan to offer arm and steed to any fact assaulted along the grand highway of literature. Although we are told that Truth crushed to earth will rise again, no gallant soul should hang back and leave a mangled truth to the tardy ministrations of the "eternal years."

It is not, however, the sins of omission or of commission of any foreigner which have inspired the protests of this paper, but rather the time-old indifference to their own prophets in which this country—like every other—fulfils the scriptural maxim on that point. Neither do any of these strictures refer to the honest critic who is capable of independent and fearless judgments, both favourable and unfavourable to the work under his consideration. And that we have

a few such reviewers it is only fair to acknowledge at the outset. But that we have another class mentally and morally incapable of knowing a good book when they see it, and another lacking the courage to avow their convictions, is also an acknowledgment which common honesty compels.

Any one who has carefully studied the various criticisms of our best books as they appear from year to year, cannot have failed to be instructed and disheartened at the difference 'twixt reviewer and reviewer. From the revelations which some of these reviewers furnish of their own limitations, one could easily and accurately reproduce just such a criticism as they would have written of *Hamlet,* had that tragedy fallen into their hands before its rank in literature was settled. Something after this fashion would they have attempted to measure the ocean with their pint cups:

When Steel Strikes Punk

"HAMLET, BY MR. WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE.

"This is a very readable play, though we think the author sometimes overdoes his situations and characters and parts of Hamlet's soliloquies might have been abridged with good results. But in the main, the interest is well sustained. In some of the scenes there is a display of no little wit and humour, and here and there we find passages expressed with much felicity, for Mr. Shakespeare has an *excellent vocabulary* and evidently writes with much painstaking."

Or, had it chanced that *Paradise Lost* was the volume that was committed to their sapience, the review would have proceeded somewhat upon these lines:

"PARADISE LOST.

"The author of this poem has attempted a rather daring undertaking in poetising upon so sacred a theme, yet it is only fair to admit that Mr. Milton's treatment of it is, on the whole, very *satisfactory*. The author uses words in a scholarly way, and, without hesitation, we may call some of his lines decidedly

good, evincing as they do a correct use of metres and cadences.

"Though the subject is not new, we must concede that Mr. Milton has given evidence of much imagination in rehabilitating it, and should the author sometime attempt a poem upon more original lines we have every reason to expect that it will be as *creditable* a performance as this."

Or, once again, had it been our beloved Lamb who was brought to the block by such bunglers, can we not hear their dull edges haggling in this fashion?

"ESSAYS BY ELIA.

"The volume before us is a collection of rather pleasant but desultory papers on such trivial subjects as 'Ears,' 'Roast Pig' and 'Whist.' The author has an easy, good-humoured style and is occasionally almost witty. It is a pity that one who has such facility in the use of words—for so much we are willing to grant the author—could not have chosen more dignified themes requiring a serious and logical treatment."

When Steel Strikes Punk

Nor shall we find these imaginary reviews one whit overdrawn, if we compare them with the scandalous diatribe on George Eliot, written by Charles Reade, who declared that the former was "a writer of the second class," possessing "no imagination of the higher kind," and "little humour"; or the kindly words of the fifteen-year-old critic, who advised Zangwill to eliminate four-fifths of what he wrote and some day he might write a "readable book." The first miscellaneous estimates of Mrs. Wharton's books furnished appalling evidence of the total inability of the average reviewer to appreciate anything so rich in subtle overtones and undertones as is the work of that author. Among all the first reviews of Mrs. Wharton's writing (which met the writer's eye), there were only two that were in any way adequate. Now that Mrs. Wharton's rank as an author of marvellous psychological insight and power and unique deli-

cacy of expression is fully recognised in England and in America, of course there has followed the usual applause, from critical Liliputia, which is characteristic of the Liliputian reviewer.

Those who are interested in the study of the different sounds which result from striking steel against steel, brass, tin, wood, or punk, may find an ample opportunity to satisfy their curiosity in looking up the various reviews which appeared of "The Gentle Reader," by Dr. Samuel McChord Crothers. Though those who had read some of these essays in the *Atlantic,* knew them to be as Lamb-like as their title, the chorus reviewer, remote from "the burning bush," had not yet caught his cue, and some of his criticisms of this whimsically delightful essayist were "out of all whooping."

When Dr. Crothers told us that the scholastic variety of ignorance had "no value except as a sort of gelatine culture for the propaga-

tion of verbal bacteria," was it to be expected that Mr. Gradgrind Smug, reviewer in ordinary to the *Do-'Em-Quick,* would show any more responsiveness than a china egg to the warm broodings of its would-be mother?

Alas! no, *dulcissime rerum;* for Dr. Crothers and all his kind speak a different language from the polarised vernacular of Mr. Smug and his prolific race. And the difference between the two is much more vital than the merely external difference which exists between the languages of two people of different nationalities. If my soul knows the same psychological alphabet that your soul knows, we cannot fail to comprehend each other, though you speak Greek and I Chinese. But if our souls are not pitched in the same key, natively, no interpreter can help us.

So in the realm of literature, the motto for readers, like the motto adopted by a

bright young woman for travellers, is "to him that hath shall be given and to him that hath not shall not be given," though he hold in his hands the rarest volume that was ever written. Books should be tried by a jury of their authors' peers, or superiors; for "the greater comprehends the less, but the less cannot comprehend the greater."

But many people imagine that a superficial knowledge of books, or their titles, is all the equipment necessary for a reviewer, which is much like expecting botanical discriminations from a cow, on the ground that she has eaten a good deal of grass. In reality, it requires the same genius to know a good book that is required to know a human soul, with all its high and low tides, sky reflections, undertows, and breakers. And to be a good judge of souls is as rare as Hamlet's honest man, who was one in ten thousand.

The most liberal education, which furnishes the reviewer with accurate knowledge

and external standards of measurement, is only one of the necessary qualifications of a critic who deserves the name. But a so-called liberal education cannot liberate the soul of a man or woman, naturally deficient in sympathy, delicacy of feeling, and sense of humour. Lacking these qualities, one cannot be a good critic, though the universities of three countries have supplied him with unassimilated knowledge. Possessing these three requisites, one may yet be a good critic though he have little Latin and less Greek. For these characteristics make a reviewer capable of bestowing discriminating praise or censure. Without these qualities, enthusiasm is impossible and when that possibility is cut off, criticism is little more than a stilted exhibition of wooden pedantry.

To come upon a genuine burst of enthusiasm, a criticism absolutely adequate and commensurate with its subject, is a rarely invigorating experience. For there

are so many people who exhaust their powers of appreciation in some such words as "interesting," "very satisfactory," "very creditable," "good," "readable,"—or, under their utmost pressure of enthusiasm, "excellent." Now these are all excellent words. But when one can go through life, without finding anybody or anything which can elicit a more perfervid expression of emotion, the chances are that the emotion could not be made fervid by any combination known to men or angels. For expression generally keeps pace with the emotion behind it. The size and spread of the branches of a tree—its expression above ground—usually match the spread of its roots under ground. It is a cramped soul that is never enthusiastic. The French go further in a proverb which says that "he who is incapable of enthusiasm possesses an envious and unlovely disposition."

The sound of steel 'gainst punk more than

once smote the sensitive ear of Lowell, who confessed in a letter the pain of his disappointment at the reception first given to one of his finest poems.

Time cannot make a classic of anything that is not one as soon as the author's ink is dry upon it. And a good critic should be able to know a masterpiece as a masterpiece when it is only twenty-four hours old. In other words, the discriminating critic will not allow the halo of fame and distance to blind his judgment of things that are new and near.

Recapitulating, the essential qualities which make a good critic are, first of all, honesty, courage, discrimination—mental and moral—a sense of humour, and the capacity for enthusiasm.

The honest and courageous critic never waits to see what some other paper says before knowing what to think of a book; the critic with a sense of humour will have the

only scales upon which the humour of others can be weighed; and lastly, enthusiasm, in a critic, is the product of all the other qualities mentioned, — the answering spark which, witnessing the encounter of steel 'gainst steel, proclaims the critic capable of rising to the level of the author who inspires his enthusiasm. Mr. Stedman, in his estimates of his brother-poets, is a critic of this type. I once heard another good illustration of criticism at its best in a sermon on Lincoln, delivered by Dr. Savage. Every one of the qualities which make a good critic were in evidence in Dr. Savage's address,—even that rarest one, which is not blinded by the enchantments of time and authority.

Though the fact seems self-evident on careful study of the necessary data, I think very few men would dare to assert, as did Dr. Savage, that Spencer was a far greater thinker—as he should be—than Plato. The cumulative dividends of awe that have gath-

ered about Plato's name have so paralysed the judicial faculties of the average critic that he is as incompetent to reach a just conclusion as the bibliolatre is to weigh the evidences of The Higher Criticism. Yet it seems hardly credible that any intelligent man or woman who reads the pump-handle dialogue of the "Republic" alongside of the "Data of Ethics" or "First Principles" could fail to indorse Dr. Savage's verdict.

The American authors who have been singled out for consideration in this paper are merely representative and by no means exhaust the list of finely original contributors to latter-day American literature, whose salient characteristics—notably illustrated in "A Journey to Nature" and "The Court of Boyville"—are freshness, diversity of fancy and humour, and a nice psychological perception of the little less and more in thought and feeling and their expression.

Finally, if I may have one more last word

with the patient reader who has thus far followed me, it shall be this:

Lay it not up against the American author that he is as a rule entertaining; neither scornfully impute it to him for lack of seriousness and solidity. The diamond, though "bibulous of light," is the hardest substance known, and its cutting power is in no wise diminished by its ability to catch and reflect the poetry of the rainbow. It is nothing less than dishonest juggling with the scales of justice, whenever the implication is made that what is valuable in literature must possess the unleavened seriousness which Pater called an "incurable malady." Solidity is not a synonym for heaviness and dulness, though the popular comprehension of the word has long been misled by that fallacy. Yet the entire Bible and Shakespeare speak in no uncertain tones to the contrary.

The ethical and literary value of Mark Twain's luminous proverb, "a man may have

no bad habits and have worse" would hardly be enhanced were it paraphrased into some such painfully serious and club-footed statement as this: There are men and women of most respectable character and unblemished reputation, whose virtues are incontestable and whose governing principle is derived from a high source, who yet suffer from some unconvincing inheritance of rectangularity, so that the total personal effect which they produce upon their fellow-creatures, with whom they come in contact, is frequently not calculated to stimulate to an emulation of their virtues but rather to inhibit any action of such natural tendencies towards integrity as might be originally resident in their bosoms.

OUR KIN AND OTHERS

If it were possible to measure the volume and colour of our affections toward the various representatives of our kind, the so-called lower animals and the non-sentient objects of the universe, the registration might be found to correspond in a general way to the varying volume and colour of the arteries, veins, and capillaries.

The strong arterial affections of our life are necessarily few, and like the arteries help to vitalise and keep it pure. The venous affections—sometimes mistaken for arterial—may stand for any attachments, like the miser's or worse, where sordid and unworthy motives or ends degrade the bond; while capillary affections fitly define the thousand and one ties, of hair-like strength—by whose network we are almost insensi-

bly bound to our material environment. For every animal, bird, tree, rock, knoll, clump of ferns or wayside blossoms, every outline of the horizon, or curve of the sauntering meadow-brook, or even a familiar series of sky-scallops made by the roofs and cheerful chimneys of one's native city, makes its own peculiar emotional draft upon a susceptible nature.

A hard-headed physician once told the writer that in the lonely days of his misunderstood boyhood he once impulsively embraced a large hemlock tree, whose shining, green branches seemed to beckon him the sympathy which he had failed to receive from his own kin. Even a gigantic boulder, however austere its stony exterior, has power to win a nook among the tender memories of man. And how many a traveller over the great treeless plains of the West could testify to the gripping strength of his affection for the forests, mountains, and sun-

sets from which he has been temporarily exiled. From childhood up, perhaps, he has been under the tutelage of stimulating peaks and noble-minded forests, and when he is deprived of their tonic companionship, he is sometimes more genuinely bereaved than many a man from whom death has removed a merely nominal kin.

Even more compelling than the strength of the hills for some people is the sway of the ocean, when it speaks to its own:

"And I have loved thee, Ocean! and my joy
Of youthful sports was on thy breast to be
Borne, like the bubbles, onward; from a boy
I wantoned with thy breakers—they to me
Were a delight; and if the freshening sea
Made them a terror—'twas a pleasing fear,
For I was as it were a child of thee,
And trusted to thy billows far and near,
And laid my hand upon thy mane—as I do here."

Both for the strength and quality of the emotion aroused, our feelings toward the ocean, mountain, and forest must be classed among the great arterial affections of life,

which in some respects transcend the highest personal relationship, lifting a man, as it did Coleridge, into a vivid consciousness of the presence of "God—our nearest of kin."

"O dread and silent Mount! I gazed upon thee,
Till thou, still present to the bodily sense,
Didst vanish from my thought; entranced in prayer
I worshipped the Invisible alone."

Thus does Nature differentiate our affections and disaffections, through a thousand shades of feeling, from human and superhuman attachments and antipathies so strong that nothing but death can change them, to impersonal and pulseless preferences and mild aversions of which we are only dimly aware.

By means of this benign precaution, the soul of man may find in Nature and his different kinships, such graded psychical atmospheres as are provided for the weak and the robust in the different physical zones and

climates of the world. In harmony with this protective policy, a child is insured against the sometimes deplorable accidents of his immediate ancestry by being furnished not only with parents, but with uncles, aunts, brothers, sisters, cousins, and a sufficing variety of hyphenated relatives, achieved or thrust upon him, by matrimonial extension. So it is occasionally possible to antidote the depressing effects of a too strenuous parent by the more debonair tuition of an uncle or aunt, or escape from the sometimes too despotic sovereignty of a close relative to the more gracious dominion of one less akin and more kind. Nor does this provision on Nature's part seem less benign because brothers and sisters, aunts, uncles, and cousins are generally the unavoidable sequence of having parents. How much we owe to this prepaid insurance on our happiness, we may roughly conjecture by comparing our own estate with that of

Adam and Eve. Perhaps half the cause of their Fall may have been due to the anomalous condition of having no childhood in which to experiment—under parental discipline—with comparatively harmless falls, to be properly denounced by all their kindred, and yet not serve as an adequate pretext for expulsion from Eden.

Our ill-starred ancestors, moreover, were less fortunate than their descendants of today in possessing fewer channels for the outlet of the multifarious affections which may jet from the heart of man, fertilising his experience and rendering it fruitful. Until Cain and Abel appeared, Eve could have known but one kind of human affection, which, however sufficing of its kind, must have been lacking in the discriminating appreciation which comes from comparison. But her great-great grandchildren have a thousand heart and brain ties that bind them to heaven and earth and all that in them is.

Our Kin and Others

In addition to paternal, filial, fraternal, cousinly, conjugal, and friendly ties, the man of to-day finds in the world of literature another series of more ethereal, but scarcely less genuine, kinships, which often exercise a strong tidal effect upon the waves of consciousness. Sometimes it is in the author himself that one discovers a much wished-for ancestor, brother, or cousin; or it may be in one of the author's well-drawn characters that one meets a friend or near kinsman who fits into a niche in the affections, previously unoccupied save by a lay-figure of fancy. It would be interesting to know how many readers of "The Bishop's Carriage" have welcomed, in the whimsical and winning personality of Mr. Latimer, one of the dearest of their friends whom they have never met.

Not only the people who walk the pages of fiction, but the real heroes and heroines of history reach back from the buried cen-

turies to clutch at our heart-strings and plead for the peculiar kind of affection which they perhaps missed during their earthly pilgrimage. How many a man has responded to such an appeal as it has been transmitted through the pages of history, in behalf of Marie Stuart, who during her brief and tragic career never seemed to find precisely the kind of affection which her nature required.

Attachments like these, between the quick and the dead or between the living and those who have never lived except in an author's fancy, are possible only to those endowed with a good imagination and a warm sympathy—usually twin qualities,—and the intensity of the infatuation is always modified by the absence or presence of rivals in real life, against whom the heroine of fiction or history must contend.

Fortunately for the race, even the most bewitching heroine of romance may generally be deposed by a very ordinary woman

who is less dear but not so far. The rule of elimination by substitution also works more or less effectively with all kinds of affection. The childless wife too often turns the natural channel of maternal affection upon a dandified poodle, upon which she lavishes a grotesquely extragavant tenderness which might be the physical and moral salvation of some motherless or worse than orphan child. Such cases strikingly illustrate the fact that sentimentality and wholesome sentiment rarely flourish on the same soil. The woman who takes a cotton-batting "Teddy bear" to drive with her, ignoring en route a score of half-starved human waifs, is a woman of whom one may well beware. One may also have well-grounded doubts concerning the mental and moral constitution of a man or woman who never pats a dog's head or a horse's neck, or strokes a winsome puss, so obviously created for caresses.

For very beautifully was it ordained that

our natures should also be enlarged by the universal current of affection which maintains the tender protectorate generally existing between us and our dumb brethren in furs and feathers. But even this possibility has had its perversions. Not only dogs, cats, parrots, and other pets, but scores of inanimate objects like old books, stamps, autographs, old china, or old bedsteads have become the recipients of an affection thwarted of its natural expression. One man whose amorous currents are turned awry reverses the engine of choice and wins the spectral bride of military, political, or literary glory; another feeds the church with the curdled remnants of his affection; and still another gives the tireless devotion of his shrunken self to a mute and unfeeling preposition.

To the looker-on without robust convictions concerning "The Hand of Destiny," all these dechannelings of affection—even

to heroic ends—are more or less melancholy perversions of nature. One may acknowledge that the results are often valuable to the state, the church, or science, but he cannot forget their cost, or the possibilities for still greater achievements had the might-have-beens only been. "Thoreau," one hears the believer say, "might never have left the rich literary legacy which he did, had his wooing of a woman been as successful as his later suit to Nature."

But, remembering that rare heroic spirit, who bravely trod his way alone rather than allow his affection to decline upon another less worthy than the woman he loved, the sympathetic sceptic can see another Thoreau whose literary vintage might have been still richer had there been no blighted fruit in his vineyard. In common with others like him, who have tried to substitute communion with Nature for a less impersonal companionship, Thoreau has been grossly misun-

derstood by those who have not discerned that the man who attempts such a substitution is never an emotionless hermit, but one who feels most keenly the strength of human ties.

The opposite inference also seems logical in the case of a man who can become so enamoured with a Greek preposition that the soft witchery of its charms will obliterate the more trivial fond records which some inexorable damsel may have made upon the elastic tablets of his heart. When a man can find only in Nature—the goddess of infinite variety—partial consolation for an unrequited affection, he pays a high compliment to the receding divinity of his dreams. But there is no such inferential tribute of honour in the pedantic inclination—about twenty-three and a half degrees—of a man who can without much discomfort transfer his polar preferences to a preposition. Nor is this any aspersion on the harmless and

necessary preposition, but merely a digressive observation leading to the reflection that the proper mate for a man who can become oblivious to all else in the world save prepositions would be a woman who could be equally infatuated with a Greek enclitic. The progeny, moreover, of a pair mated by such a purely capillary attraction might assist the cause of specialism by devoting its lifetime (the gender is probably accurate) to the study of commas.

Ignoring the trackless country into which this digression has led him, the reader may now consider one of the graver aspects of the subject in hand: namely, the difficulty which sometimes attends the discovery of one's own kin. One's parents according to the flesh are generally not far from the cradle where one first takes a babe's-eye view of the universe. But one's carnal and spiritual ancestors are not necessarily identical. The latter may be living thousands of miles

from the former and be so coy of discovery that they are not found until the child is grown up, or too late to assist his second and more important birth. His real brothers and sisters, uncles and cousins, also, may be living in kinless isolation on another hemisphere, in another century, perhaps, and speaking another tongue. For many of us find our nearest kin in relatives that do not branch on the family tree. It was in frank acknowledgment of this fact that Emerson wrote: "I cannot go to the houses of my nearest relatives because I do not wish to be alone."

Emerson, however, was happier than most great men in possessing a genius for finding the kin that did not branch on his family tree. Even in his own town he could claim a close spiritual brother and several cousins, while in beautiful accord with his own theories, enunciated in the Over-soul, his very greatness, which would necessarily limit the

number of his friends in a town of moderate dimensions, at the same time raised him to such an elevation that the whole thinking world became suburbs to his spirit—and sent him, over mountain and sea, all those who were "native of the same celestial latitude."

But many other great men have been less fortunate, even to the point of psychical asphyxiation, for lack of congenial companionship. "Nine-tenths of the people one meets," complained Horace Walpole, "serve no other use that to make one wish to be with the other tenth," and the other tenth is often strangely elusive. For despite Nature's bountiful provision of every degree of consanguinity, she seems to have given man no infallible clue which will enable him to find those fine intangible possessions to which his soul is heir. Hence it has come to pass that men and women have suffered from atrophy of the affections, until they seemed the human counterparts of the stark

trees in the dead forests of Yellowstone Park.

And if we cry, "O Nature, so kind and so unkind, why do you haunt us with spectral forests of dead trees and why do you haunt us with human lives from which the vital sap of human affection has been tapped away by tragic chance?" we shall get no clearer explanation of one enigma than of the other, unless we read an answer in the recklessness with which the individual is invariably ignored, when whole cities are wiped out by volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, famines, and floods.

But Nature's silence concerning her mysterious ways is now and then broken by her champions, the poets, who would lullaby our doubts to the tune of those much-quoted stanzas:

> "Serene I fold my hands and wait,
> Nor care for wind, or tide, or sea;
> I rave no more 'gainst time or fate,
> For, lo! my own shall come to me.
>
> . . . . .

The stars come nightly to the sky;
The tidal wave unto the sea;
Nor time, nor space, nor deep, nor high,
Can take my own away from me."

Yet is Mr. Burroughs' muse very closely cross-questioned by the latter half of another poem, whose well-known lines have the strong, throbbing cadence of sincerity:

"Two shall be born the whole wide world apart,
And speak in different tongues, and have no thought
Each of the other's being, and no heed;
And these, o'er unknown seas to unknown lands
Shall cross, escaping wreck, defying death,
And all unconsciously shape every act
And bend each wandering step to this one end,
That, one day, out of darkness, they shall meet
And read life's meaning in each other's eyes.
And two shall walk some narrow way of life
So nearly side by side, that should one turn
Ever so little space to left, to right
They needs must stand acknowledged face to face.
And yet, with wistful eyes that never meet,
With groping hands that never clasp, and lips
Calling in vain to ears that never hear,
They seek each other all their weary days
And die unsatisfied—and this is Fate!"

Which poet shall we believe?

Our Kin and Others

Turning to the pages of life for evidence, we shall find both confirmation and denial of each poet's faith, or lack of it—in the histories of well-known men and women. From what we know of the domestic felicities of Browning, Tennyson, Emerson, Poe, Lowell, Longfellow, and Holmes, one might count upon the endorsement of Mr. Burroughs's poem by each of these poets. But could we be so sure of the signatures of Shakespeare, Shelley, Milton, Byron, Keats, Heine, Pope, or even of Scott, Whittier, or Lewis Carroll? all of whom would be more likely to endorse the latter part of Mrs. Spalding's poem. In Byron's case we have something more than a conjecture in one of his own stanzas:

"Ye Elements!—in whose ennobling stir
I feel myself exalted—can ye not
Accord me such a being? Do I err
In deeming such inhabit many a spot?
Though with them to converse can rarely be our lot."

Our Kin and Others

One might possibly have expected that Milton's blindness would have lent to his inner eye a keenness of vision denied the ordinary man, whose outer eye is sometimes blinded by a feminine mirage. On the contrary, he seems to have been entirely destitute of psychical vision and incapable of using even the artificial lens which experience provided him.

Heine, also, with pathetic persistence, sang his wonderful lyrics into an ear hopelessly deaf to their melody; and Keats, with no less melancholy ardour, mistook for his own a woman with whom he had no psychical affinity.

But it would be ungracious, as well as inaccurate, to dismiss the subject by saying that poets have generally evinced a strange inability in finding their own. For one should remember that finding his own—that is, his peers—is a much more difficult task for a poet than for a proser for simple

reasons so clearly set forth in the old quatrain:

> "Sparrows, when they choose to pair,
> Make their matches anywhere;
> Phœnix, though so sadly great,
> Cannot find an equal mate."

Conceding, then, that it is easier to find dandelions than orchids, it follows that Amos Jiggins might find his own—a thousand of them—more readily than Shakespeare could find one of his, even if one such existed.

Moreover, who may adequately estimate the merely numerical hindrances which can separate one from his kin? In the vast genealogical forests of a planet of several billion inhabitants, one could easily miss his family tree on account of the woods. For aught you know, you may have been seated only two or three pews away from your soul's nearest kin, the last time you attended a strange church in a strange city. Or, your real brother, by the strongest of all ties,—a

heart bond which the brain endorses,—might very conceivably have been one of the six hundred thousand who were slaughtered in the Civil War, or one of the fifty thousand buried by the last earthquake in India.

Confronting such undeniable disparities between the possible and the actual, as Nature tosses her dice, the reader must supply wakeful footnotes to the dreams of poets. Yet let him never doubt that sometime the poet's dream may become a more universal reality, since the true poet is always a prophet and the great future will be full of occurrences only dreamed of in the philosophy of those who are only half awake.

For the soul of man will never cease to explore its own infinitudes, until it discovers in itself latent powers which will one day subjugate its rebellious subjects of time, space, and chance. And in the clearer dawn of that day, it may be written, that even now,

the poet's dream might have been more often fulfilled, if every man had been obedient to the subtle unwritten laws, which, violated, will keep his own away.

WHERE THE VEIL IS THIN

To the man who reads between the lines of a book or hears between the sentences of a conversation, there is sometimes quite as much entertainment in tracing the sublinks of association—the covered bridges between two remarks—as in listening to anything that is said.

Mr. Haladay, who has been much in society, began the study of conversational sublinks half unconsciously and soon found himself possessed of so much skill in playing his game that he could trace a five-jointed conversational sublink back to the last spoken idea with which it was associated. His mental methods are similar to those used by chess-players, who can see seven or more moves ahead; but in Mr. Haladay's game,

the computation is made backward a certain number of moves from the last conversational play.

In the *causeries* of the unschooled and ingenuous, the unspoken is often so obvious that little skill is required in bringing the coupling thought to the surface. But Mr. Haladay's especially delight is the game furnished by the suave *dame de société,* who burns her conversational bridges after her, or, like an Indian, cuts off traces of her trail by crossing into the obliterating waters of an irrelevant theme. To find the buried psychological chain in the conversation of such a woman is to Mr. Haladay as gamesome a pursuit as angling for an elusive speckled trout.

A good illustration of the link obvious is the remark made by a servant who had applied for a position in the Carlyle household. Mrs. Carlyle was ill in bed at the time and Bridget was summoned to her room. After

enlarging for a few minutes upon her every-day qualifications for the place, Bridget gave a comprehensive glance at Mrs. Carlyle's pale face and clinchingly added: "And I can lay out folks jest perfect when they dies."

A twin illustration of this case, where the mental bars were left wide open—oh, so very wide!—was the inadvertency of Mr. Dummheit, who went to visit his friend Jacob, emaciated by a long illness. After an intermittent and unsatisfactory tête-à-tête, Mr. Dummheit solemnly remarked: "You are very pale, Jacob, very pale"; then, following a pause of four seconds and a glance at the narrow stairway: "It'll be mighty hard to get a box down them stairs, Jacob."

Of the same order of sublink was the laconic *résumé* of Jim Landon, a half-witted boy who attended a school in which Miss Simcoe and Miss Ella Delmot were teachers. Jim had conceived a violent affection for

Miss Simcoe, but like another more famous character he had let concealment play its Shakespearian rôle until a day when Miss Simcoe fell dangerously ill. And here it may be stated, with a relevance which will appear later, that Miss Simcoe was a very tall young woman. When Jim was informed of Miss Simcoe's condition, he remarked—with marvellously swift readjustment to the situation—"long coffin; marry Ella."

Again we see the gaunt outlines of the Unspoken rising plainly to view in a case furnished by Mrs. K. This gentle lady has a very large nose, rivalled in its proportions only by the beak of Mrs. Swandee of the same town. Mrs. Gauche, who has met Mrs. K. for the first time, immediately enquires if the latter has ever happened to meet Mrs. Swandee. In the smile of too perfect comprehension with which Mrs. K. answers that she has had that pleasure, it becomes evident that both the question and

its cause are naked and open daylight to Mrs. K.

Once more, a gentleman whose misfortune it is to be divorced confesses that he is asked on an average of once a week if he has ever met Mrs. B. Q. or Mrs. E. H., well-known ladies who are unfortunate in the same way.

How cruelly patent, too, was the casual remark of Simon Hillside to the ugly daughter of a playmate of his youth: "Yes, I knew your mother very well; *she* was a very fine-looking woman." The aged, also, know all too well the poignant thrusts of unintention. Not long ago a grand-army man in the West wrote a delightful, semi-pathetic article in which he humourously remonstrated with those who were "washing the old veterans into their graves" with the premature dew of sympathy. Very naturally the old veteran who reads that there are "Only a few of them left now," or the moist headlines, "The Very Last of

the Old Boys," feels his march to the grave accelerated by the sharp spurs of recollection. And when a company of "the Old Boys" are further entertained by poems whose cadences rise and fall to the imminent expectations of mortality, one cannot wonder that a protest rises from even the stoutest-hearted of the old campaigners.

"We are so glad you are still with us," as a form of salutation is so nearly a well-meant paraphrase of "What! haven't you gone yet?" that its very common use should make the judicious reconsider. To be told that "you are holding your own," or to be congratulated on having so few grey hairs *"at your age,"* are likewise compliments which come with C. O. D. charges of implication.

Having sufficiently considered the unseemly uses to which the innuendo lends itself, we may with more comfort review its gentle offices, so well known to the success-

ful lawyer and lover, both of whom know how to turn an inference or implication as the helmsman knows how to capture and convert a contrary wind to fill his sails. "And so I owe you my life," said the pseudo-heroine of "Lady Baltimore." "And so I restore it to you complete," rejoined her disengaging fiancé.

In the region of verbal half-lights inhabited by the fine-eared, the society woman also feels her way with the surety and precision of an old sailor climbing a mast. For she knows by instinct and experience the chasm which lies between fulsome flattery which offends and the delicate intimations of appreciation which please. *"Enfin,"* said Madame de Récamier to the coming guest, and *"déjà"* to him who came to say good-night.

Thus by a thousand tokens do we discover that the language of the man who deals exclusively in hardware ideas and the

language of the man who catches all the flitting iridescence of its possibilities to convey the nuances of thought and feeling, are avenues of communication as widely removed as the music of a tin fife and the harmonies of a violin. A whole world of tender exchanges of thought and feeling—the grace notes and overtones of inflection and inference—may bridge over the space between total silence and the point where speech leaves off.

"By that I mean just what you think I mean," was the neatly direct indirection used by Dr. Parkhurst in one of his sermons when he wished to convey a certainty not easily conveyed by the ordinary stage-route delivery of speech. An equally alert perception of "the little less and more" that are such worlds away accounts for the captivating innuendoes which play bopeep through the pages of Dr. Crothers's essays: "I know of no greater luxury than that of

thinking well of my fellow-men. It is a luxury which a person in narrow circumstances, who is compelled to live within the limits of strict veracity, sometimes feels to be beyond his means."

Further illustrating the half-revealed and the unexpressed are several chapters—notably "The Whaup and the Whimbrel"—in "A Little Sister of Destiny," by Gelett Burgess, and nearly every chapter in "The Four Million," by O. Henry.

Almost all of Dooley's best jokes are also compounded of delightful indirections which never miss their direction. Such is one of his latest: "A law, Hinnissy, that might look like a wall to you or me wud look like a triumphal arch to th' expeeryenced eye iv a lawyer." This elusive bopeeping quality always marks the choicest brand of humour. Jokes, indeed, might properly be divided into two great classes—the kinetic and the potential—and the difference in the time re-

quired for their appreciation—nationalities being equal—is about the difference in the time required to fire off a rocket and reach the powder end of a ten-foot fuse. Examples of the kinetic joke may be found by scores in almost any newspaper. The potential quip is much less in evidence, though I find a very good one in a current periodical: "And have you no recommendations from your past employer?" quoth the lady to the tramp, who applied for work. "Alas! madam, my last employer died twenty-eight years ago."

The humour of Mr. Howells is nearly always of the potential type, as unobtrusive as twilight, though he sometimes allows his characters to indulge in the cruder forms of wit. In "Memories and Impressions" the truly Howellesque humour is perfectly illustrated by a story of one of those very unawares-looking angels, popularly known as a tramp. After the usual histrionic tale

of woe had been confided to the author's ear, The Unawares One asked for enough money to pay his fare to Hartford. "The tramp," writes Mr. Howells, "solemnly promised to refund the loan the instant he reached Hartford; but I am left to think that he never arrived."

Some of the world's best Limericks have won their distinction by their skill in rendering a telling score with the soft pedals of expression. Witness the inspired transposition of the smile on the lady's face to that of the tiger. Was ever boisterous declamation echoed so far as this gently whispered dénouement?

Among the straw-blown evidence of the world's progress the meliorist should not overlook the convincing testimony offered by the jests of bygone days and ours. Not only are some of the jokes made by Shakespeare's characters brutally coarse and offensive, but not infrequently they were put

in the mouths of his finest heroines. Portia, Ophelia, and Rosalind all say things that would give any decent suitor of a modern novel pause. Neighbouring a passage in which fancy and tenderness weave a pattern as delicately fine as the dew-hung gossamer of morning, one finds another passage dominated by utter grossness. Some one demurs, of course, that so is life—an undeniable fact, without doubt. But unless we all care to "see life" in all its flesh-and-blood phases, why should we care to "see life" of the same kind transposed to the pages of literature? Why should one take any more pleasure in the company of a vile-tongued character begotten by fancy than in the society of his counterpart in life? Certainly the evil communications of the one are no more desirable than those of the other.

Penitently returning from this digressive *lèse majesté,* let us consider the semi-kinetic and potential jest as Shakespeare tempers

them in the mouths of Launcelot and Rosalind:

Launcelot—"This converting of Christians will raise the price of hogs." (Hamlet, availing himself of synecdoche, would probably have said bacon.)

Rosalind—"Your having in beard is a younger brother's revenue."

From a daintily veiled definition like this to the wordless message which may be carried between a period and the beginning of the next sentence it is only a step, and the finest type of literary man always knows how to take it. For he has learned that the most subtle function of language is its Marconigrammatic (one regrets but cannot avoid a word of such inordinate length) power to communicate by the ground currents of suggestion, without the usual alphabetical wires. This inner-eyed possibility of language is always recognised by the characters of Mrs. Wharton, Mr. Henry James,

and Mr. George Meredith. In fact, the latter sometimes conveys the impression that all the wires are down and his characters hopelessly trying to make telepathy answer for wireless communications and Marconigrams for every-day speech. As a rule, however, there are few literary entertainments more delicately diverting than a James - Wharton - Meredith conversation where half of the characters say so many good things by saying something else. What perfect mastery, too, is their art of letting an inflection or a significant pause complete the context of a remark.

One feels that anything like an old-fashioned bare-boned proposal of marriage from the hero to the heroine would be as out of place in a story by these authors as a troglodyte dining at Delmonico's. But if one of their heroines was told that she had invested the rest of womankind with a garment of comparative futility, she might

reasonably infer what were once known as "honourable intentions"—unless her wooer was a spineless whiffler like Mr. Selden of "The House of Mirth."

The ability to accentuate the force of any idea by veiling it with a suggestive drapery of words, is always the gift of the man who makes good definitions. When George Meredith referred to a second marriage as "a triumph of hope over experience," he said a great deal more by not saying too much. The same end was achieved by Mark Twain when he said: "A man may have no bad habits and have worse." Here, save for one word, we have a complete ellipsis of expression more illuminating to any intelligent reader than a ten-page catalogue of specifications into which the *worse* might have been expanded. The author, moreover, pays his readers a compliment in allowing their imaginations and memories right of way. As a result, the pointed end of the maxim

lends itself to a hundred different elaborations and each reader is permitted to do a little thinking of his own, which is always a more or less desirable privilege.

Curiously pertinent to the subject are the shadow embroidery and shadow designs of fabrics so much in favour at the present moment. What is this but a revelation of the same spirit which produces the veiled and elusive in literature and in art? The gradual etherealisation of Whistler's work manifested itself in a wonderful series of demonstrations of the science of omission—the art of saying more with a few lines than could be said with twice as many.

Nor does the *Zeitgeist* fail to furnish us with parallels even in the grosser departments of food manufacture and in the transformations which they undergo in their passage from the pantry to the table.

How elusive and transcendental look the

aërated breakfast foods of to-day compared with the solid and sometimes soggy candour of the breakfasts of our ancestors. Testing some of these flaky sophistications one duplicates literally the experience of those traducing readers who claim that they have been "chewing the wind" when they read Emerson. Were they sensitive to the innumerable analogies of the universe, the proprietors of hotels and restaurants would label as *the impressionistic course* most of the first items on their breakfast menus, or, call it the suggested course.

In all this evolution of suggestion mankind is only toddling to his feet by the skirts of his dear old grandam, Nature. For who so elusively expressive as she? A dealer in vanishing dawns and sunsets, and other fair lubricities,—an artist of the evanescent, half of whose mediums are vapour, shadow, and sheen. Like man, to be sure, she sometimes writes her tales with realistic candour in

naked daylight; but afterward she tells the same story elusively in moonshine, or paler star-shine, barely suggests another tale in the fugitive pictures of cloudland, or anon totally suppresses her composition in fog or the blackness of night.

We have heard a good deal about a "missing link," but Nature piques us with a million missing links. To our finite comprehension every page of the volume she has written is dotted with the asterisks of omission. Like a text-book of rhetoric, Nature writes us skeleton sentences in which she gives a phrase or a clause, leaving us the privilege of supplying the rest. Sometimes we can, but more often we cannot. Something after this fashion does she prepare her exercises for the children of men:

"I spewed up San Francisco because——"

"The purpose of the unbearable heat of one zone and the no less intolerable cold of another is——"

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"The method by which the rattlesnake achieves its ends suggests——"

"The suffering caused by invidious comparisons to those innocent races or individuals whose faces are caricatures, finds its explanation——"

"I helped raise a beautiful crop of wheat and then destroyed it by hail so that——"

"The rose and almost every other blossom and fruit that grow have a bug or worm ready to devour them as soon as they appear, because——"

And so might one go on indefinitely, giving typical sentences from Nature's exercise book; but illustrations enough have been given to show that Nature values the emphasis of omission, by her practice endorsing the admonition of one of her natural sons:

> "But still keep something to yoursel'
> Ye scarcely tell to ony."

Far from regretting these reserves on Nature's part, one should gratefully recog-

nise them as a beneficent insurance against the cockiness of human knowledge and the contempt bred of familiarity. For similar and other reasons, the reserves of the modern Cupid, who ever and anon is upbraided for his undemonstrativeness (although I suspect upon wholly inadequate evidence) are more commendable than the iterations of those who "protest too much." Being a much-evolved descendant of Venus, the modern Cupid has learned that it is possible for an emotion, like a crater, to become extinct by over-expression.

He knows, moreover, that all intense feeling is so immediately telepathic that its message has been received long before the head has translated the Esperanto of the heart.

A PLEA FOR THE NATURALISATION OF GHOSTS

"If a man has a power that transcends the senses, it is at least presumptive evidence that it does not perish when the senses are extinguished."—Dr. J. J. Hudson.

"I have never had any strained relations with ghosts, but I prefer to have them keep their side of the fence." Such was the inhospitable pronouncement of one of our most eminent clergymen, otherwise most catholic in his tastes and tolerances.

Making the usual discount which the luminous humour of this particular clergyman requires, I am still at a loss to understand how one committed to the tenets of universal brotherhood can slam the door in a poor ghost's face and repudiate his fraternal

claims merely because he has cast off his "muddy vesture of decay" and donned the more intangible vestments of invisibility.

And, again, who shall decide which is the ghost's side of the fence? For aught we know, ghosthood may confer an inalienable title to both sides of the fence, and in matters of international etiquette a certain amount of reciprocal deference is desirable. Yet not a jot or tittle beyond his rightful merits would I press the claims of the harried ghost. Considered as an elusive entity, or as a figment of the imagination—as you will,—is he not, as a figment, or a whimsey, entitled to as much consideration and courtesy as a brownie or fairy, to whom the world long ago—in the interests of poetry and imagination—gave the freedom of this little planet.

Presenting, therefore, the case of my unknown plaintiff on the modest and purely negative grounds of nonentity, I would be-

speak for him more respectful and considerate entertainment from his arrogant brethren who are clothed upon with the grosser garments of reality and visibility. Admitting—for the sake of giving the adversary standing-room—the ghost's nonentity, we should keep in mind that there are hosts of things bearing names that are every whit as non-existent as the ghost's bitterest enemies believe him to be. For example, there are The Perfect Man, whom Scripture ingenuously advises us to mark, and The Infallibility of—well, almost anybody or anything; The Inevitable Word, The American Type, The Great American Novel, The Unpardonable Sin, The Holy Roman Empire, The Fourth Dimension, The Philosopher's Stone, and The Freedom and Equality of all men. And yet all these mental nebulæ have had their *raison d'être* in lengthening the short rope with which Fact would tether Fancy.

The Naturalisation of Ghosts

It is hence manifest that the nonentity of a ghost should in no wise disqualify him as a candidate for citizenship in our Intellectual Republic. To the timorous, indeed, were they logical, the nullibiety of the ghost should be his chiefest charm. Neither should invisibility be imputed to him for a disqualification. Can we see electricity, the force of gravity, or that still stronger power which is said to make the world go round?

But viewing the case of the ghost, again, on the more positive grounds of hypothetical entity, we shall find still other reasons for offering him the full rights of citizenship. If America is true to her traditions, as the land of the free and the home of the brave, she should not restrict immigration, or re-emigration, from celestial shores or even from Stygian Beaches.

Neither should the fact that the ghost is by tradition without visible means of support militate against him. One might bring

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the same charge against many of the most beautiful things in Nature—the clouds, rainbows, or for that matter the very earth on which we stand and the entire stellar community swinging in celestial space. Compared, moreover, with the social and intellectual status of any other of our immigrants the record of the ghost is indefinitely superior. Strikes, murders, intoxication, vulgar display, and profanity are wholly unknown among them. *Per contra,* it has been urged against the ghost that his communications to men are trivial and his table-tippings irrelevant. But these accusations are like the libellous charges brought against an entire college of several thousand students because a dozen among them have made themselves and their doings badly eminent. The record of ninety and nine sheep that go not astray is always overlooked by the man who jumps at conclusions and publishes the jumpings of the hundredth sheep.

Even so, one reckless bourgeois ghost that gets into the public eye by a night of barren rappings and futile observations may obliterate on the pages of history a yearful of quiet and profitable *causeries* of well-bred Socratic ghosts, whose disclosures may have great pith and moment. In passing, however, it should be remembered that any communication however unimportant, *per se,* is important if it helps to authenticate the fact that it is a communication from the Undiscovered Country.

But to return, the well-bred ghost, like the well-bred man, seldom courts publicity; as a consequence, ghostdom is too often judged by its misrepresentatives. One might as well condemn all social intercourse among the living on the ground that a good deal of it is trivial and irrelevant. We must not expect to find a higher percentage of intelligence among the disembodied than among the embodied.

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Not less unreasonable and absurd is that scampering, shivering attitude of soul which so many good people manifest at the mere mention of these gentle visitants to "the glimpses of the moon." Were the ghost either all his best friends or his worst foes assert, the only manly and logical attitude towards him would be that instinctively taken by Hamlet:

> "I'll speak to it, though hell itself should gape!"
> "Why, what should be the fear? . . .
> And for my soul what can it do to that,
> Being a thing immortal as itself?"

Incidentally, we find in the fact that Shakespeare allowed his greatest character to consort with a ghost another argument in favour of granting the ghost naturalisation papers. This is not saying that we should keep an open door to the ghostly rabble. The law of each to his own applies here as elsewhere. But ghosts in good and regular standing, such as made the transition

in an odour of sanctity, should assuredly not be expatriated from their own because they can no longer express themselves in the cruder incarnation acceptable to their brethren still in bonds. How, moreover, if our hair goes up like "quills upon the frettèd porcupine," at the mere mention of spirits, may we disown the unhandsome inference which any ghost is entitled to draw: to wit, that he might well have crossed the Great Divide some years earlier, if once across, his friends are all so anxious to keep him "his side of the fence."

Coming now to the point where our subject is to be considered as a positive reality, we are obviously bound to give our theme the more serious treatment which it demands at the hands of any fair and open-minded thinker.

Let us soberly contemplate, then, the not impossible entity known as a spirit, a name which is partly freed from the lurk-

ing stigma of incredibility and semi-humourous significance which attaches to the word ghost. With respect to opinions and beliefs on this subject, as on so many others, there are two classes between whom a great gulf is fixed: the people who say "there is nothing in it," though they have never spent an hour's time either in investigations of their own or in sifting the evidence collected by others. The other class are those who after years of careful and patient research are certain that there is something in it. There is also a third class, including the present writer, made up of people who have not had time for original investigation, but who—in a wonder-filled universe—find abundant evidence for believing a great deal possible which has not come under their eyes. The views here advanced are consequently merely the *à priori* speculations of one who would be glad to make the acquaintance of any pleasant congenial ghost who would give

more certain evidence of him or herself first-hand.

Among the first class mentioned, those who know all about any subject without investigation, one finds most interesting paradoxes. The very orthodox brother who is perfectly comfortable while he reads in his Bible, "He shall give His angels charge over thee," and other passages relating to "ministering spirits," when confronted with the present possibility of such ministering spirits, about him, recoils in horror or indignant protest, sometimes calling it "all nonsense" or "the work of the devil," an easy but very inaccurate method of solving any vexed problem. Another kin of this very certain man, perhaps, declares "that we have no right to try to pry into such matters."

As the last-mentioned position involves a pivotal point, it may be worth while to give it more than a passing notice. For any intelligent being, *in the body or out of it* (let

the orthodox please take notice of Paul's expression), might well challenge anybody to cite any valid authority in the universe which ordains that there shall be no communication between those who still tarry within the boundaries of time and those who inhabit eternity. Nay, more, the existence of millions of avowed Spiritualists bears witness to an overpowering instinct which protests, and has protested, since time was, against the total suspension of intercourse between those whose love survives the accidents of time and matter.

Yet with a strangely pertinacious inconsistency—far removed from the noble Emersonian brand—many a churchman who would call any doubter of immortality a heretic, bristles with very secular combativeness whenever any rational attempt is made to obtain positive proof of immortality. Every geologist of the past has had to run counter to the same attitude of fearful timid-

ity—an attitude on the part of the Church which has well merited the epithet "stuck-fast" applied to it by Dr. Parkhurst, if my memory serves. In few, the Church—like one who gives up stolen property—has sometimes seemed willing to give credence to anything so long as "no questions are asked." Is this a manly and heroic attitude of mind? Is it really worth while to have beliefs of any kind whose claims to validity are so precarious that they cannot bear investigation?

When it comes to the subject of what men are willing to call "their immortal souls," the motto which seems in force is: "I will be ignorant and nobody shall help me." Looking at the matter dispassionately, if the immortality of the soul is really a matter of some importance, why should any one be hostile towards any efforts which may help to illuminate the subject? In his calmly judicial masterpiece on "Human Personality

and Its Survival of Bodily Death," Mr. Frederic Myers tells us that "It is strictly true to say that man has never yet applied to the problems which most profoundly concern him those methods of inquiry which in attacking all other problems he has found most efficacious."

Dr. Savage, also, very pertinently remarks (I quote from memory) that "When a man spends years trying to classify the scale of a fish, his findings are considered with awe and labelled science; but the results of the investigations which have been made in trying to learn something about the immortal soul of man are dubbed superstition."

Spirits and immortality, it would seem, are all very well if taken like credo capsules, in the old-style method of disposing of thirty-nine articles which a normal man could get down by no other than the capsule method. But ours is a day of honest probing. We are perhaps a trifle less afraid than

our remote ancestors of new truths, even when their light gives a sallow tinge to the complexion of old ones. The same inborn instinct which inspires the dauntless voyages to the frozen north impels us to push farther and farther across our intellectual frozen zones.

For a quenchless hope forever tells us that beyond the ice-locked region that temporarily baffles our quest, there lies an open sea for the finding of the explorer who can keep his blood warm by out-daring all his predecessors. Then will our geographers be obliged to change the old designation, Unknown Regions, which now marks our Polar Playground. And just as surely shall we be obliged to rewrite some day the rash placard, "The Great Belt of the Unknowable" which marks the *ultima thule* of the Frigid Zones of Thought. To the generation before him Marconi's explorations were in the Zone of the Unknowable. But one

by one the barriers go till we have justified the expectation that the man-made demarcation between the natural and the supernatural will pass also. Having seen so many of the prophecies of poets and romancers turn to undeniable reality, our faith requires only a small mustard-seed tonic to make us look for the fulfilment of Milton's lines, The

> "Time may come when men
> With angels may participate."

According to several million devout believers that day already has come. In any case, a cloud of witnesses will not be lacking to those who will take the trouble to read the reports of the Psychical Research Society. But no evidence will receive very much attention from the man who fancies he has explained and settled a difficulty by giving it a name which smothers its interrogations. The glib use of the word telepathy to cover all the phenomena formerly

accredited to spirits is a case in point. The fact that nobody can explain telepathy seems to give no embarrassment to those who use the term to explain something else that is neither more nor less mysterious. Even Dr. Hudson, who does better than most expounders who expound without explaining, fails to see that if he has proved his case for telepathy in his "Scientific Demonstration of the Future Life," he has given his opponents full as much ground to stand on as he himself has. *For his whole thesis rests on the theory that telepathic communications are always between the subliminal* selves: *i.e.*, between those organs which, in his own words, "transcend the senses." But when he says that "If a man has a power that transcends the senses it is presumptive evidence that it does not perish when the senses are extinguished," he has also given a presumptive suggestion, if not evidence, that the same power will be just as free to com-

municate with mortals after the senses are extinguished as it was before.

Certainly, it is no physical part of a man in Massachusetts that by telepathy reports a fact to a man in California. And if it is not physical, how can the physical disintegration, known as death, affect its action?

Dr. Hudson reminds one of the early opponents of higher education for women. There were plenty of men who would concede that music and a language or two might not be detrimental to the feminine mind. But the suggestion that a woman could study all the subjects investigated by men was too preposterous to be considered save with ejaculations of horror. So Dr. Hudson, though willing to concede, and even anxious to prove, that the soul is immortal, draws the line at any post-mortem powers and privileges of communication which were permitted the poor soul while it still dwelt in its tenement of clay.

The Naturalisation of Ghosts

I strongly suspect that it is not for any man to say what a spirit can or cannot do. Meantime, spirits will have to run counter to the same prejudices that confronted women who were trying to work out the evolution of higher education. If some one in the body asserts that a spirit cannot communicate with his tethered brethren in the flesh, it is a challenge to the spirit to demonstrate that it can, and if we may trust the reports of the psychical research society, the spirit is attempting that very thing.

But there are no reports sufficiently well authenticated to convince a man who will not be convinced. There is, however, a large class of hospitably-minded agnostics who will agree, I think, with my main contention: namely, that even if a belief in the existence of disembodied spirits is purely fanciful—which no one can prove,—it would be far better to have such a belief than possess a mind hermetically sealed to every idea

which cannot give the grosser senses as references.

On every mooted subject it were well to remember that the inner eye has been a pioneer scout whose discoveries have always been centuries ahead of those made by its outer brother.

SERENDIPITY

For the benefit of those who may have forgotten the exact restrictions imposed upon the word, serendipity, by Horace Walpole, who coined it, it may be well to refresh the memory of my readers by an extract from a letter written by that author to Horace Mann:

"I once read a silly fairy tale," wrote Walpole, "called 'The Three Princes of Serendip.' As their Highnesses travelled, they were always making discoveries, by accident and sagacity, of things which they were not in quest of; for instance, one of them discovered that a mule blind of the right eye had travelled the same road lately, because the grass was eaten on the left side where it was worse than on the right. Now do you understand serendipity?"

From this explanation of the word, serendipity is narrowed in its significance to cover only the genius for finding things for which one is not looking—a talent which might or might not be profitable to its possessor. But like every word that loses some of its original significance, or wins a new increment of meaning, even the slight use which has been made of serendipity indicates a disposition on the part of those who have used it to lengthen its etymological tether to include the discoveries of things sought.

A very good reason for abolishing the original limitations which Walpole placed upon the word is the obvious lack in the English language of any adequate word for the sixth sense whose achievements are recorded in this paper. Yet another reason for allowing the word more latitude is the great psychical disparity to the ear between the spacious word serendipity and the very

limited function which Walpole made it cover. As he defined it, it is nothing more than accidental sagacity—an open-eyed alertness of the Sherlock-Holmes order. But the sagacity by which one discovers something for which one is seeking, requires a more complex and subtle endowment, of which alertness is only one factor. One might call this composite faculty "coincidental sagacity," a term coined by Mrs. Emma Carleton, or sublimination; but neither word wears such a becoming garment of syllabic occultness as its accidental brother, serendipity, a word whose history most curiously illustrates its meaning.

I have, therefore, retained Walpole's word in my study of subliminations, allowing it the wider interpretation which befits an age of assimilation and expansion. This by way of preface.

Though for many years a bowing acquaintance of the psychologist, the subcon-

scious mind, or subjective self has hitherto been such an elusive entity that the larger part of the population of the globe has probably no suspicion of its hypothetical existence. Like wireless telegraphy, which wears the invisible helmet of Mercury, the subconscious mind manifests itself only in results. Yet such glimpses of its transcendental finesse as have been vouchsafed us are enough to lure any one not of the Smug genus to a closer investigation of its esoteric accomplishments. These accomplishments, moreover, would seem to proclaim the subliminal self as an obedient servant, holding itself *en cache* in the soul's crepuscular territory, where it regulates the functions and sensations of the body, and stands alert to catch a good or bad suggestion and carry it out.

From the record of its achievements up to date, we are entitled to infer that the subjective mind has more subtle faculties and

more unerring senses than any of the five through which the objective mind apprehends the universe. Though most psychologists consider the subconscious mind only as an intelligence which reveals itself when the objective mind is off duty,—as in sleep, somnambulism, and hypnosis,—there is reason to believe that it is also in evidence, like a psychical footnote of the waking consciousness, on a great many other occasions where its elusive presence is ignored.

Still, if studied closely, these other occasions of waking consciousness might be found to coincide with the objective mind's moments of preoccupation. Be that as it may, many of us are doubtless familiar with the strange sensation of getting "returns" which seemed to come from some more remote and inaccessible storehouse of information than the one to which the objective mind holds the keys. While the conscious mind was groping for a match, the subconscious

mind—or whatever one may choose to call it—turned an electric switch, and we saw.

To the inventor and discoverer, especially, the sensation that his conscious intelligence receives assistance from another one comes again and again, and, with greater or less vividness, the same experience is known to the student who is translating a foreign language, or the author who is dangling his literary line for the gamy bite of inspiration.

In fine, there is every indication that we have a pair of minds, just as we have a pair of arms, hands, feet, lungs, ears, and eyes; "and this assumption is justified," says Dr. Hudson, "for the reason that everything happens just as if it were true." Out of the acceptance of this assumption several interesting problems arise. If the subconscious mind is so sapient, responsive, and obliging, why not appeal to it more frequently when the left-handed attempts of the objective mind are futile?

Serendipity

If the subconscious mind, under orders, can wake a man at an unusual hour, decided upon the night before, as has been demonstrated again and again; if it can protect him when he walks in his sleep or staggers in his cups; if it can carry out the most complicated suggestions made by the hypnotist; why should we not give it suggestions ourselves and all turn Aladdins as we rub our wonderful lamps?

And why should we regard any of the powers of our silent prime minister as abnormal, simply because they were first discovered by hypnotists?

To return to our former query, then, if the subconscious mind can wake a man at four o'clock, if he chooses to give that order, why not test the utmost powers of our obedient servant by making more difficult demands of him? Why not ask him to help us get any piece of information that we may need? That this has already been done, con-

sciously or unconsciously, there is abundant testimony. Every writer knows that he can get fuller returns if he can "set" his subject over night—or longer,—just as a woman "sets" her bread. Something like the yeast which makes the bread rise and expand ready for kneading, the writer, *by his demand,* injects into the unrisen dough of consciousness and the next day, or month, there is a rise and he is ready to knead his literary bread. In other words, the writer's demand is like the hunter's "sic 'em" to his hounds, which trees the game he is hunting. Just how this demand is answered perhaps nobody can tell us. But that it is answered would probably be the testimony of nearly everybody who has baited a trap for ideas.

That there is a much closer and finer rapport, natively, in some people than in others between the two members of their psychical firm, there can be no doubt, though this rapport is, nevertheless, capable of cultivation.

Serendipity

In Thoreau, the *entente* between the conscious and subconscious selves was so close that it endowed him with an uncommon amount of serendipity, so that he could stoop down and pick up rare Indian relics (unseen by others) to illustrate his conversation, when he chose. As Emerson wrote of him:

> "It seemed that Nature could not raise
> A plant in any secret place,
> In quaking log or snowy hill,
> Beneath the grass that shades the rill,
> Under the snow, between the rocks,
> In damp fields known to bird and fox,
> But he would come in the very hour
> It opened in its virgin bower,
> As if a sunbeam showed the place,
> And tell its long-descended race."

In nearly every family there is one member who has a knack for finding things. Sometimes the thing lost is a useful article, like a pencil, penknife, or eraser; or, again, it may be a word, a name, or a historical fact. For the gift of serendipity finds an almost boundless field of operation for its powers.

It might, indeed, be defined as one of the most important functions of the subconscious mind, for, when well developed, it will serve its possessor to tree a thousand kinds of game as unerringly as the keener instinct of smell helps the hound to find his quarry by its tracks.

But a few illustrations may illuminate the subject of serendipity more than considerable theorising about it. Not long ago a lady, Miss Brame, received a letter in which there was a reference to The Cave of Adullam. Though the name was perfectly familiar, every fact connected with it had faded from memory, and her conscious mind gave several sharp raps at the basement door of her subliminal self. The day following the receipt of the letter, Miss Brame attended church in the little country town where she was spending the summer; and it should be noted that it was the only time that summer that she went to church. In the pew

in which she chanced to sit, she saw a harmless-looking, pink-covered, Sunday-school magazine, the kind one vaguely associates with those happy, early days when one's literary standards are not especially drastic. As the service had not begun, Miss Brame opened the pink magazine, mechanically, and was startled to find herself confronted with a full-page picture of The Cave of Adullam, and a long article upon that subject. So far as she could recollect, she had seen no reference to the Cave of Adullam in many years till she saw this article on the day after her receipt of the letter mentioning it—the day when her conscious self had rung up her subconscious self for the lost information so promptly delivered.

Of course, one may call the event a "coincidence"—a word which seems to be very adequate and comforting to many who cannot render a reason. But if it is a coinci-

dence, it is one which has many composite features worth investigation. Namely, how did it happen (?) that Miss Brame should chance (?) to go to church that particular Sunday, and happen (?) to drift into the only pew in the church (as she afterward ascertained) in which there was a magazine containing the information which she sought? And, having found that pew, why did she feel an impulse to investigate that pink magazine?

On another occasion, Miss Brame was correcting some proof in which the word Talleyrand had been misspelled. Without thinking, she supplied the missing *e*, and then, pausing to "consider too curiously," was beset with doubts whether there might not also be some authority for a different spelling. She looked in an old unabridged Webster, but could not find the word. She then consulted several other books in three bookcases containing seven or eight hun-

dred volumes—but the word was not found.

The day following, as she was abstractedly pacing the floor, she felt "moved" to go to one of the bookcases mentioned and take a book from its shelf. The choice was apparently a purely random one, and the book was Mathews's "Getting On in the World." When Miss Brame opened the volume, her subconscious mind called over its wires: "Perhaps you will find Talleyrand in the index; such writers usually bolster themselves up with copious references to men who have 'gotten on.' "

In accordance with the suggestion, the index was consulted and Talleyrand's name was there.

Another parallel instance is furnished by a journalist (whom we may call Mr. Whitman) who had occasion to use the well-known saying of Lincoln: *"I want it said of me by those who know me best, that I have*

always plucked a thistle and planted a flower wherever a flower would grow." As Mr. Whitman wished to give the quotation accurately, he went to a library and fumbled over several volumes in quest of the sentence, but failed to find it. Two days later, he moved to a boarding-house whose inmates were known to him, as he had spent the previous winter there. Three days after his arrival, as he stepped into the room of a fellow-boarder to ask for a match, he happened (?) to glance at a quotation calendar, hanging in a corner of the room. It was the twelfth of February, and the selection given on the leaf for that day was: "*I want it said of me by those who know me best,*" etc.

Another "coincidence," says the scoffer. Perhaps; but was it not odd that among the fourteen inmates of that boarding-house, Mr. Whitman should have happened to go to the only one who had a calendar with that quotation upon it; and, furthermore,

was it not a peculiar chance which sent him on the only day when he could have seen the quotation?

Since this essay was begun, there has drifted to the writer—perhaps by the same laws of serendipity—another instance of the phenomena under investigation. In an article in a recent issue of *Success,* Julian Hawthorne tells a story of a significant experience in the life of Franklin Pierce, when he was a young man teaching his first school. One noon, one of Mr. Pierce's brightest pupils brought him a difficult problem and asked for light upon it. As Mr. Pierce saw that it was a problem which he himself would need to work some time upon, he told the boy to study on it till the next day, when he would help him, if it was still unsolved. Mr. Pierce spent his noon hour and all his hours till nearly midnight in an unsuccessful attempt to solve the problem. Then in despair, he made a petition

to Higher Powers. Immediately after, he noticed an old secretary in his room, and mechanically opened its doors, though to no purpose so far as he was aware. He stared at the shelves and was about to turn away, when his eye caught the corner of a bit of paper sticking out over the edge of the top shelf. On that bit of paper, systematically solved, was the very problem on which he had vainly worked for hours.

A dozen other illustrations, equally significant, might be given, but two more will be sufficient to show the subtle action and achievements of the faculty of serendipity.

As he was about to publish a book, Mr. W—— wanted to examine several samples of book-cover paper, in different shades, but he had no notion where to send for them. One day, while the matter was still fermenting in the under layers of his consciousness, he was passing through the hall of his boarding-house and happened (?) to glance

into his landlady's sitting-room, where a little girl was making various coloured dresses for her paper dolls.

"Come and see my dolls' new dresses, Mr. W——," called the little girl.

"With pleasure," was the response, and Mr. W—— began to examine the wardrobes of the paper ladies.

"And where do you get all this pretty paper to make your dolls' dresses?"

"Oh, papa has a whole lot of sample books, full of different kinds of paper. Would you like to see them?"

"It's just what I'd like to see," said Mr. W——.

Whereupon the little girl ran upstairs and returned with several large books of sample cover-paper, in a bewildering variety of colours and shades, such as are manufactured by the leading paper mills of the United States.

Though there may be no way of proving

that this, too, was not a coincidence, is it not the kind of coincidence that should give the thoughtful pause, when one remembers that the striking facts of the case are these: At no other time in his life had Mr. W—— cared to see a sample book of cover-papers. At no other time in his life did he ever see such a book; yet the book materialised when he most wished to see it, and with no action on his part, beyond that which operated from his unexpressed desire.

On another occasion, Mr. W—— was writing an article in which he needed the word *monochord,* to illustrate his point. But the word held itself persistently aloof, despite the fact that its pursuer spent several hours in a city library looking for it in volumes—on musical subjects—so ponderously exhaustive that the tree could not be found on account of the woods. A few days later, in a small country town where Mr. W—— was visiting, he picked up a very

provincial paper and glanced over its first page. The first headline that caught his eye was: "The Monochord; a Brief Account of Its Construction and Uses."

That the incidents here given might be duplicated by hundreds of my readers there can be no doubt. But the chief difficulty in the way of collecting phenomena of this kind has its root in the habit most people have of either ignoring the significant incidents of their experience, or obtusely dismissing them, when noticed, as "coincidences"; which is another way of saying that in a majority of people, the powers of wonder and observation are in a semi-comatose condition. On the other hand, wherever we find the powers of observation and wonder especially keen (as in Thoreau and Emerson) there we shall find the gift of serendipity highly developed.

Any influence, then, which sharpens the powers of observation and fosters wonder

will help to develop the faculty of serendipity and establish a free correspondence between the conscious and subconscious minds. There are people, however, in whom the Peter-Bell attitude toward life and all its marvellous manifestations is so innate and chronic that wonder can be aroused in them by scarcely anything less demonstrative than an earthquake or volcanic eruption. Others, again, are sucked into a maelstrom of business or social affairs which deprive them of the leisure and retirement which are indispensable conditions for the development of wonder and all its far-stretching horizons of mystery.

To a greater or less extent, we are all like a man who owns a very complete outfit of tools of every degree of fineness adapted to diverse kinds of work, but who never learns to use any but the very coarsest of his implements. Or, with still closer fitness, perhaps, we may be said to resemble a man who lives

in a hut and cultivates potatoes and turnips on the surface of a field in which there are rich veins of gold and silver, which he might find were he only to dig a little deeper.

But the generations of the future will sink their mining shafts deeper—as Ribot and other psychologists have done—below the surface layers of consciousness, and psychical treasures, not dreamed of in our philosophy, will be brought to light. Not only a sixth sense, but a seventh, eighth, and ninth one, will be uncovered in the days when men shall as assiduously study themselves as they have hitherto studied more irrelevant subjects. For is it not reasonable to suppose that there should be the same progress of discovery in the psychical world as well as the physical?

Time was when passengers and messages were snailed to their destination by slow stage-coaches. Now the locomotive, telegraph, and telephone whirl men and mes-

sages through space with a speed that would have seemed incredible a century ago. And all this progress in the material world is but a part of the evidence of the increasing astuteness of the human mind, which every year unlocks a few more doors to the secret chambers of Nature's treasure-house. Is it then improbable that psychologists will continue to bring to the problems of the mind the same increasing power to ferret out secrets which the inventor and discoverer have brought to the problems of the material world, till mankind shall read a fresh significance in the now dimly apprehended saying: "More servants wait on man than he'll take note of."

And among those servants, none is more dexterous and versatile than the Ariel-like faculty of serendipity—that composite subliminal sense, whose finer vision begins where that of the eye leaves off, whose more acute hearing catches a thousand

psychical vibrations unheard by the ear, and whose invisible tentacles elaborate and refine the sense of touch as the sun refines translated water to golden clouds and rainbows.

RUSKIN

One knows not which is sadder, the sudden passing of the wind-blown rose, whose velvet petals fall, still clothed with colour and laden with perfume, or the slow death of the golden-rod, lingering weary weeks upon its stalk, the stiff grey ghost of its former sun-clad self.

As it steals upon the golden-rod, so death has come to some of the great ones of earth. Form has survived colour, and a chill silence muffled the prelude to eternity.

Such was the passing of Ruskin, art critic, reformer, and man. For he was one whose last years were wrapped in stillness, so that on our side of the deep, many would have had to stop and think twice, during his last years, to assure themselves that the author

still held any title to carnal estates in "the glimpses of the moon." It was perhaps because his title to remembrance was at any time so little carnal that the sense of his bodily presence or absence was lost or merged in the more vivid consciousness of his spirit still abiding with us, clothed in the immortality of the ideals which are his progeny.

Of the various manifestations of that spirit this paper can give but a brief and faulty survey. For it would require a regiment of critics to take anything like an accurate measurement of the intellectual and moral dimensions of a man like Ruskin, who in his capacity of art critic or rhetorician was always, in an interlinear way, a moralist and a reformer. Perhaps no man, who, like Ruskin, has felt an ecclesiastical clutch at his sleeve, can ever get over a clerical bend of the elbow. It was possibly better that he could not. Be that as it may, whatever

his line of activity, the air of the pulpit hung round him still. This fact accounts for much of the adverse criticism on Ruskin's work on art. To him, art was good or bad in proportion as it produced certain emotional or moral effects. Naturally, such a theory would find little favour with those whose shibboleth is art for art's sake. But Ruskin's idea of its true purpose may be gleaned from a single sentence in his "Modern Painters":

> "That which ought to have been a witness to the omnipotence of God has become an exhibition of the dexterity of man, and that which should have lifted our thoughts to the throne of the Deity has encumbered them with the inventions of His creatures."

While it may be possible that Ruskin was justified in expecting a moral end and "a permanent good" from a landscape painting, it is an attitude that will always be opposed by those who like to see the lilies arrayed in all their glory, but resent the notion of

making them toil and spin in the interests of morality. If it is, moreover, a sense of the omnipotence of God that Ruskin would have impressed upon the world, why should it not be gained directly from Nature herself? If there is anywhere any intelligent being who could not get such a message from the innumerable miracles which encircle and overarch him, he certainly would not be likely to get it from such a tiny, imperfect copy of one of Nature's infinitesimal parts as any man can put on canvas. Ruskin's argument also provokes the suggestion that the "dexterity of man," whose exhibition he so unnecessarily laments, is always a new witness to the Omnipotence which makes him so dexterous. The mental and moral altitudes which a man can attain ought to be about as impressive as the more tangible altitudes that glorify God in a mountain landscape. As Emerson has said, "the genius of man is a continuation of the power

that made him and that has not done making him."

A good deal should be overlooked, however, in a man, who had not only the courage of his convictions, but of his enthusiasms, which requires a still nobler form of intrepidity. To these same enthusiasms, also, we owe the incisive magnificence of Ruskin's style. Speaking of a critic, in *Blackwood's Magazine,* Ruskin remarked that "writers like him deserved the respect due to honest, hopeless, helpless imbecility." Reading this, one wonders if the same amount of arduous feeling, welling up in the bosom of a man devoid of oratorical gifts, would not have passed off in a comparatively impotent sputter of words. Any one who will carefully notice the different expressions used by his friends when their emotional mercury is in the nineties, will perceive that it is the man with incisive rhetorical gifts who will make a deep and cleaner cut, though his temperature

may be no higher and his moral attitude no more reprehensible than that of another who has at command fewer choice, pungent, and assorted adjectives. The latter may use just as much muscle in delivering his blow, but his battle-axe will not cut if it has no edge. Hence the difference between the classic rhetorical gashes of Whistler and the fearful unrecorded black-and-blue spots which Hiram Jenks, *et hoc genus,* inflict upon those who arouse their ire.

But the enthusiastic tone of Ruskin's praise was as objectionable in certain quarters as his censure in others. The world has so long practised the obituary method of appreciation that it feels a slight sense of impropriety and insecurity in any contemporary plaudits. Wait till he is well dead and four or five decades of daisies have bloomed over him, says the world; then, if there is any virtue in his works, we will tag and label them and confer immortality upon him.

Nor would there be any occasion to demur at this method of procedure, in so far as it concerns that emptiest of all acquisitions, known as fame,—the very vapour of human achievement.

But more than frequently, it happens that a man who uses his brush or pen needs to eat, and upon this vexing, insistent problem post-mortem appreciation has no very vital bearing.

Ruskin, in open defiance of the Fabian policy of bestowing fame, boldly came forth and dared to be enthusiastic about an artist upon whom the world had, at that time, bestowed no distinguishing tag or label. For ten long years Ruskin continued to proclaim the laws of light and shade and justify to man the ways of Turner's art. In his fifty-first year, looking back at his undaunted efforts in that artist's behalf, Ruskin made the pathetic confession that those ten years were lost so far as their chief purpose was con-

cerned, and a similar avowal was made concerning his researches in the by-ways of architecture.

So, after innumerable discouragements, Ruskin reached the stage where men sigh and quote Pope, especially the lines,

> "One pleasure past, another still we gain,
> And not a vanity is given in vain."

For Ruskin at length had learned that the power of appreciation cannot be conferred upon the masses. He had also made some valuable but painful discoveries concerning his own earlier work, which he frankly imparts to his readers in the preface to "Sesame and Lilies." He acknowledged that some of his criticisms were "disfigured by affected language, partly through the desire to be thought a fine writer and partly in the notion of returning to the better style of old English literature." Page after page of what he has himself called fine writing may be

found in the "Modern Painters," but one sentence, or two will serve as an illustration:

"Between these two ridges the fire of the sunset falls along the trough of the sea, dyeing it with an awful but glorious light, the intense and lurid splendour of which burns like gold and bathes like blood. Purple and blue, the lurid shadows of the hollow breakers are cast on the mist of the night, which gathers cold and low, advancing like the shadows of death upon the guilty ship as it labours amidst the lightning of the sea, its thin masts written upon the sky in lines of blood, girded with condemnation in that fearful hue which signs the sky with horror, and mixes its flaming flood with the sunlight, and, cast far along the desolate heave of the sepulchral waves, incarnadines the multitudinous sea."

This description, and many others like it, were rhetorical colour conflagrations, in their effect very much like Turner's blazing landscapes. Whether nature would recognise her own portrait, in either case, or whether

she could ever materialise in all its tropical luxuriance one of Ruskin's verbal landscapes may well be a matter of doubt with many.

But it would be ungracious as well as unnecessary to dwell upon such features of Ruskin's work. In pleading guilty to the charge of fine writing, Ruskin made further criticism of it unnecessary and left to others the more grateful task of appreciating the beauty and sublimity that have made his works classic.

Though it is now read on a well-thumbed page, will the following paragraph ever cease to delight us?

"Who saw the narrow sunbeam that came out of the south and smote upon their summits until they melted and mouldered away in a dust of blue rain? Who saw the dance of the dead clouds when the sunlight left them last night, and the west wind blew them before it like withered leaves? All has passed, unregretted and unseen; or, if the apathy be ever

shaken off, even for an instant, it is only by what is gross or what is extraordinary; and yet it is not the broad and fierce manifestations of the elemental energies, not in the clash of hail nor the drift of the whirlwind that the highest characters of the sublime are developed. God is not in the earthquake, nor in the fire, but in the still, small voice."

Times have changed since Ruskin wailed so hopelessly over the indifference of mortals towards the charms of Nature. Nowadays, all manner of people rush in where poets once feared to tread; and tyros, with only a bowing acquaintance with the birds and buttercups, take liberties with them in print. As Lowell plaintively put it, people "blab" till it is "refreshing to find a man as apparently indifferent to Nature as she is to him."

From nature as from art, Ruskin always wished to force a text; and it is only fair to admit that the sermons which budded from the rod of his displeasure were as interesting

and impressive as the biblical graft permitted to Aaron. There are critics, indeed, who maintain that Ruskin's true province was the pulpit. But the kingdom of might-have-beens may safely be left to the poets who deal in the sad inevitability of what must be. The hard prose point of view would rather seem to indicate that Ruskin, like Emerson, only indefinitely enlarged his audience and multiplied his influence by being an author and lecturer, instead of a clergyman. When Dean Stanley went back to England he said that it did not matter what clergyman he heard in America, Mr. Emerson was always the preacher.

It may not always be as easy a matter to locate the influence of Ruskinism, but it has none the less done its work, coming down less "like dew," perhaps, than Emersonianism, and more like hail, occasionally. Neither author could long have brooked any infringement of liberty of thought.

And in their day a clergyman was more or less muzzled by the dogmas or deacons, or both, of the church with which he was connected. Even in these days, he must be careful, if he wishes to remain in his pulpit, not to disturb too many of the crusts of prejudice and fallacy that have gathered on old truths, and still more careful not to discover any new aspect of an old truth. Many clergymen, of a certain genial temperamental inertia, have no difficulty in keeping within the "safe" ecclesiastical palings set up by those who think,

"The cisterns of those Hebrew brains
Drew dry the springs of the All-knower's thought."

But Ruskin was not of these. His light was never bushelled. He believed that in the province of morality and religion, as in the material world, there were as wide opportunity and need of improvement as lay between the pine-knot light and tallow candle of other days and the brilliant electric illumina-

tions of to-day. His own contribution to the moral illumination of the world was of the electric-light order. He especially denounced and exposed those complacent sinners who luxuriate in an emotional pseudo-Christianity that ignores the wants and woes of the world and spends itself in incense and "artistically modulated Dios." To Ruskin, all this was "dramatic Christianity" that began and ended at the church doors, and against it he used all his store of rhetorical artillery.

Naturally, histrionic Christians and all those who do not like to have their attention called to painful facts found little that was soothing in Ruskin's remarks. Soothing people, however, is not the only mission which life offers. Some people need unsoothing. Jeremiah and Paul were not precisely soothing, but their remarks had their own excuse for being.

Yet it was not always as a prophet of fire

and smoke that Ruskin addressed an erring and ignorant world. Listen to him in "Sesame and Lilies," as he talks in his dear motherly—sometimes almost grandmotherly—way, making out the most exact time-tables on the pleasant roads to peace and piety. Observe, also, how adroitly he follows up a gift of bitter herbs with a nosegay of pinks or mignonette.

The unintentional humour of what has been irreverently called grandmotherly advice to young women is unique and delightful. For instance, he counsels young women "to make every day some little piece of useful clothing sewn with her own fingers," and accumulate the articles until she hears of some person in need of such things. Wayward fancy can scarcely contain itself at the thought of the mammoth supply of misfits turned out at the sweatshop rate of "one garment a day." Many of Ruskin's admonitions to the young—as well as most of

his contributions to sociological problems—must be read with indulgent tenderness and adopted with latter-day discretions. But when he leaves the realm of details and sets before women the goal towards which they should strive, his tones have in them the reverberations of Sinai.

In all modern literature is there a more inspired or inspiring tribute to women than in the chapter on Queen's Gardens in "Sesame and Lilies"? And it is a comforting fact that this volume of Ruskin's has the widest sale in America of all his books. Probably few clergymen, in the course of a long life, have found and touched to nobler issues larger audiences than "Sesame and Lilies" has found. In this book and "Fors Clavigera," Ruskin, the man, over and above the art critic and rhetorician, stands revealed; the man as his friends knew him, pure, noble, compassionate, and tender, capable of the most heroic sacrifices for those

whom he loved, or for the justice of the cause in which he believed; capable, also, of impulsive unkindness, always regretted afterwards and frankly acknowledged. These and many similar traits have been called "feminine," by Ruskin's masculine critics,—a point of view whose accuracy can be supported only by such a cosmic knowledge of womankind that the present writer waives the question, with the passing suggestion that as men often inherit some of their strongest traits from their mothers, and daughters, likewise, from their fathers, the chances are that neither sex can have a monopoly of any mental or moral qualities. Moreover, one has seen many impulsive men, here and there and elsewhere.

Ruskin's own estimate of himself, as disclosed in the Ruskin-Rossetti correspondence, is likely to be quite as trustworthy as that of any one else, especially in the light of one of Ruskin's own maxims,—"a man is

appreciated only by his equals or superiors." With two or three ink-drops, Ruskin gave in one of these letters as fair a sketch of his ethical contours as we are likely to get from any source:

"You constantly hear a great many people saying," he writes, "I am very bad, and perhaps you have been yourself disposed lately to think me very good—I am neither one nor the other—I am very self-indulgent, very proud, very obstinate, and very resentful; on the other side, I am very upright—nearly as just as I suppose it is possible for a man to be in this world—exceedingly fond of making people happy, and devotedly reverent to all true mental and moral powers. I never betrayed a trust, never wilfully did an unkind thing and never, in little or large matters, depreciated another that I might raise myself. I believe I once had affections as warm as most people; but partly from evil chance, and partly from foolish misplacing of them, they have got tumbled down and broken to pieces."

The Rossetti correspondence also gives interesting soular cross-sections of Ruskin

as he alternately scolds, admonishes, and mothers the impecunious Dante Rossetti and his invalid fiancée. The frequent enclosures of checks to Rossetti should assuredly have done much to subdue the naked and open daylight of some of Ruskin's criticisms, as for example, when he tells Rossetti that he is "a conceited monkey" to think his pictures are right, when Ruskin has told him that they are wrong. Again, in reply to a remonstrance from Rossetti, when Ruskin had made magnanimous offers of assistance, we find this plain statement of the situation:

"You and Ida [Rossetti's fiancée] are a couple of—never mind—but you know it's all your own pride, not a bit of fine feeling, so don't think it. If you wanted to oblige me, you would keep your room in order and go to bed at night. All your fine speeches go for nothing till you do that."

In a still more violent mood of candour Ruskin tells Rossetti that he is an "odd ab-

surd creature who does whatever he likes—as far as possible—as puppies and tomtits do."

From the Rossetti correspondence, as well as from the earlier letters, written to Professor Norton in the sixties, one gains the impression that Ruskin was a man who didn't have nearly as many good times as he deserved. We have painful proof of this fact in his own words to Professor Norton, in sixty-nine. "I am now in the temper," he writes, "that Omar would have been in, if somebody always stood by him to put mud into his wine, or break his amphora."

How much of this lamentable condition of affairs was the outcome of his ill-starred domestic relations and how much was due to Ruskin's own inadaptability no one can say. Certainly he was taxed his full share to illustrate the maxim, "to be great is to be misunderstood." But the magnifying power of the lens of justice is increased with each succeeding generation. We know the man of

Galilee much better than our ancestors, who knew him so little that they could persecute each other for a difference of faith and opinion.

Whatever may be the later verdicts of time on Ruskin as an art critic, the world will never cease to be his debtor, as it is still more to Emerson, for the idealism which calls to the hearts of mankind like the high mountain peaks to the traveller who has dwelt for a season on the plains. To weigh the unknown quantities of Ruskin's personal equation would require a more advanced knowledge of Ethical Mathematics than most human beings attain in this life. In Ruskin's own words, "a man is known to his dog by the smell, to his tailor by the coat, to his friend by his smile. Each of these knows him, but how little or how much depends upon the dignity of the intelligence. That which is truly and indeed characteristic of the man is known only to God."

THE SLAIN THAT ARE NOT NUMBERED

How fearful and wonderful is the childish precipitancy with which a mob, or even a nation, will capitulate to a phrase or a figure and march wildly away to the drum-beats made upon its emptiness. From the time of the self-vaunting cry, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon," to the latest political or military watchword of our own time, every nation has had its moments, sometimes years, of madly following a drum-beat made upon some empty phrase.

Among the less ephemeral of latter-day catchwords, few have disguised more treacherous and dastardly enterprises than that orotund hypocrisy, "Loyalty to the Flag." By the adroit use of the drumsticks of elo-

quence, this wind-filled phrase is made to give forth such martial sounds that the feet of the listening multitudes catch its blatant rhythm, and are ready to march away to murder, plunder, rapine, and dishonour. Then far away from the barbarous scenes of carnage, so far that the echo of war comes only like the faint reverberations of a distant church-bell, some poet will mask these abominations in cadent measures that celebrate the glory and grandeur of war.

Thus by delusive stanzas, martial music, gold braid and buttons, the war contagion spreads and every battle breeds a hundred more.

But where is the poet that would sing the glory of war after reading an unexpurgated war-epic written in the distorted features of those who bleach and stiffen upon a deserted battlefield, or the living epitaphs written on the faces of the broken-hearted?

The Slain That Are Not Numbered

These grimly authentic records of war the general public never reads, accepting instead the gilded fancies of rhetoric, or the thin deceit of statistics as inadequate to measure the losses of war as a yard-stick to fathom the ocean. The headlines of the newspapers may glibly announce, "Only One Hundred Slain," in a certain engagement, and grave chroniclers may repeat this statement in the solemn tomes of history. But no history has ever given the true record of any war. The numerical losses of a given battle may be reported as one hundred, but who has ever kept the record of the slain that are not numbered, when silence answers the roll-call after battle?

Come visit with me, in fancy, a battlefield where "only one hundred" were slain, and let us randomwise review the dead that lie there.

Look at the magnificent forehead of this young man, whose right arm is missing, and

in whose heart a bullet is embedded. In the official report of the dead, he counts but one; but what do sodden records know of all that died when this young life went out? Who kills the nightingale kills all the songs it might have sung and all the melodies that through its offspring might have linked the centuries in harmony. So perished in the death of this young man some of the rarest melodies designed for a mortal race. For he was a poet who might have been the spiritual ancestor of an endless line of noble dreams and deeds, whose influence might have checked a thousand crimes and their prolific consequences. In his death, the fructifying pollen of ten thousand souls was lost.

And here, on our left, lies a dead scientist. The world did not know him as such; it seldom knows greatness in the bud, and he was but eighteen. Even had his genius been suspected, his fate would have un-

doubtedly been the same, for it is one of the peculiarities of the system by which the targets of war are chosen that physical distinctions chiefly determine the selection of its victims. In war, each man counts one as a death-mark, whether he has the heart and brain of a demigod, or the heart and brain of a brute.

Those who collect these human targets (enrolling is the technical term for the crime) seldom pause to ask themselves whether they are giving their enemy an opportunity to snuff out a divine spark of genius, and all the world of art, song, or story which it might have created, or the privilege of ridding the earth of an encumbering vagabond.

After long years of self-denial and study, this boy scientist would have made one of the most valuable discoveries of his age—a discovery that would have saved many thousand lives in the course of a few genera-

tions. Through his murder and others like it the hands on the dial-plate of Progress are put back half a century; yet the world counts this "fatality" as only "one lost."

On his own visible inventory, the third subject of our inspection, the little thin-chested man with blond hair, may seem to count but one. But among his children, whom this battle denied existence, there was one who would have invented a machine for receiving and condensing the sun's rays and transmitting the heat so that even the poorest tenement might be warmed at one-tenth of the expense now involved. This invention would have been still further perfected and sun-heating plants would have been owned and run by cities, so that every home could have been furnished with heat as it now is furnished with water, gas, and electricity. All these results, however, will now be delayed for nearly half a century,

for it will be many years before another man capable of perfecting such an invention will be born, since Nature will not change the time of her gift-seasons because of the crimes of men.

If we choose to use our inventors, discoverers, statesmen, poets, and other great men for such criminally idiotic purposes, we have only ourselves to blame if we go without the blessings which we throw away. If a mother makes her little boy a fine embroidered jacket and he throws it into the fire, she may let him wait some time before she makes him another one.

There are interesting chapters, too, in the unfinished biography of this tall man with the dark-brown beard. He had no genius of the proclaimed order, but he possessed all its complementary qualities, gentleness, sympathy, and appreciativeness, which create an atmosphere favourable to the blossoming of genius in others. Such an atmosphere this

man would have given to the woman who would have been his wife had this war never been. Instead, she was left to lifelong loneliness. Lacking the challenging power of belief and encouragement, which this man could have given her, she lost what little faith she had in her own powers and never wrote the masterpiece which she would have written had he lived. For there are minds and hearts, like certain flowers, that can never reach fruition without the fertilising touch of some external agency. What the birds and other winged ministers of the air bring to the blossoms, this man's sympathy and love would have brought to the genius of the woman he should have wedded. Had her soul been of more common fibre, she might have consoled herself with common consolations.

But hers was a heart akin to the one of which Hawthorne wrote: "A heart of such exquisite material, so delicately tempered,

and so curiously wrought, that no other heart could be found to match it."

Close beside the man who was stolen from the woman to whom he belonged, fell a very commonplace man, as it may seem to you, with face and hands that mark his kinship to the man with the hoe. Yet who knew the deeper kinship of his heart? or who divined that all the finer buds of being, that in him were nipped by the frosts of poverty and hardship, in his son would have blossomed into luxuriant beauty? That son, had this war not prevented his birth, would have been a marvellous sculptor and his son's son the leading philanthropist of his day, a man whose benefactions would have brought to thousands life that was joyous and sweet in exchange for a dull and bitter existence.

Shall we count this life as "only one lost"?

Such an estimate might be fairly correct in the case of yonder grey-haired man, since

many years of bondage to evil have already robbed him of so much of his real life that it is problematical whether he could even be counted so much as one lost—in this battle at least—inasmuch as more than half of him had already been slain in the battles of life which men must fight as duels and with other than carnal weapons. And here fairness compels one to acknowledge that not all of the exterminations of war are lamentable, since an indefinite percentage of all armies is made up of adventurers, vagabonds, and looters. But it is not the object of this essay to enlarge upon that side of the subject.

Returning to our roll-call of the unworthily slain, what numerical estimate do you imagine might cover the loss of the square-shouldered man whose pillow is the stark body of a dead comrade? You will hardly come near the figure, for it is two thousand, increased by a very intricate and

irregular series, through generation after generation as long as men shall inhabit the earth. This man was in no wise remarkable except in the possession of steady nerves and a rare presence of mind. Had he lived, he would have prevented a fire panic, fated to occur a few months after this battle, thereby saving two thousand lives and the indefinitely long line of their descendants.

In life or death, the man with presence of mind rarely counts but one. Indeed, Nature's basis of valuation of such men may be inferred from their numerical ratio to the rest of the population. For Nature, for her various ends, has a human currency of divers metals and denominations. How nicely she adjusts her monetary ratio and controls the issue of her currency no man may divine. But there is abundant evidence to show that she never inflates her currency of the higher denominations. The ratio of Cæsars, Cromwells, Lincolns, and Shakespeares to

the rest of the population has always been most economically predetermined. Let the man who makes moan that America has produced no great poet or statesman remember that among the six hundred thousand men who were slaughtered in our civil war there might well have been a Shakespeare or Gladstone and many another great man whose loss his country could ill afford.

But the mad presumption of war destroys Nature's ratio, and the result is similar to what might be expected if one should rob the baker of two-thirds of his quota of yeast prepared for a hundred loaves of bread and then expect him to make the same amount of good bread with the insufficient remainder of leaven.

But the bread will not be light! Neither will any of the bread for which war prepares the receipt. Yet soggy or solid, it must be eaten by us and our children and children's children, until there is born a

wiser generation that will know, once and forever, that every victory won by shot and shell is a defeat.

Even now most of us know it, but few will acknowledge it. For honesty and the courage to avow the truth, with many a fellow virtue, also, belong among the invisible slain that are not numbered. Counting truly, we should add to the total annihilations of the battlefield all those partial extinctions of humanity, manhood, and character in the surviving—which follow the surrender of honesty, purity, justice, generosity, faith, trust, honour, pity, gentleness, and love.

That all these virtues are maimed—if not utterly destroyed—by war who can deny?

Examine the average pretexts for war, or for the methods by which it is carried on, or its claims for heroism, patriotism, honour, or glory, and one and all they are crude and fallacious. Be it never so muffled with

the guileful banalities of speech, war is nothing less than an echo of the wild bellow of rage which reverberates through the jungle when fierce beasts tear and crunch one another in joyous ferocity. There is this difference, however: the beasts of the forest indulge in no sophistries and bestow no medals or badges upon the animal which crunches the largest number of bones. They prey and crunch, but they never call either act "benevolent assimilation" or "the mild sway of justice."

But the devisers and fomenters of war endeavour to hide its grisly facts by distributing a kind of hush money, in the shape of a cheap but very expensive brand of glory, whose emblems are titles, badges, and life-rights to little lots in the barren Sodom known as fame.

This is but one of the many methods by which truth is garrotted. Another system hides itself in the censorship of the Press, in

which facts are either entirely suppressed, or presented in so fragmentary a style that they are misleading.

A third form of prevarication which is fostered by war is disclosed in the hoodwinking terms which we apply to our cause and our enemy, whether he has his quarrel just or unjust. When we are guilty of murder and oppression of a people that has done us no injury we try to cloak our crimes with such bespangled terms as "Oriental Development," "Exploitation of the Islands of the Pacific," and some dozen other phrases composed of ethical shoddy.

Again, those whom we murder and oppress we call "rebels," "insurgents," or "insurrectionists," though they may be fighting for precisely the same end for whose achievement we claimed the names of patriot and hero. Once more, if the so-called rebels are persistent in their determination to have liberty or death, we speak of their "sullen

pertinacity," "pig-headed obstinacy," though the same persistency in ourselves we should characterise as "indomitable courage and Spartan-like valour."

But the loophole through which truth receives most of the wounds which war gives her, is made by the pretexts which men give for killing each other and looting property. As murder can never have any sane excuse, except in case of self-defence, it follows that its attempted justification must rest upon arguments which in any other discussion would be discarded by all candid men.

Witness a few of the pretexts with which the past few years have made us tolerably, nay, intolerably, familiar:

1. "They are incapable of self-government"—and this was said of ten million people whose average intelligence, on the authority of more than one of our own officers, is quite equal to that of the Cubans.

2. "If we don't take these islands some other nation will."

3. "We can't retreat now that we have committed ourselves."

4. "Nations always have done so."

5. "It is the Finger of Fate, the Hand of Destiny."

Let us for a moment feel the pulse of each of these arguments and see if there is not a good deal of intermittency in its beats.

Taking the first one offered, on *à priori* grounds, does it seem probable at this date of history that among ten million people there should be none endowed with the qualities requisite for political leadership?

Never so are the dice of the gods loaded. Every herd of beasts, even, has a leader; and it has been said that the smallest village always contains at least one man of unusual ability in some direction, a statement which each reader would do well to verify by his own experience.

The Slain That Are Not Numbered

If our avowed solicitude concerning the ability of the Filipinos to govern themselves were genuine, we might at least give them a chance to prove the truth of our statement. But, instead, what have we done? We find in the official records (General Otis's report, page 62) this illuminating statement by General Miller:

"The city is quiet . . . the longer they [the Filipinos] remain in possession, collecting customs, running post offices, *the more they will be confirmed in the idea that they can do it. I should recommend that force be used at once.*"

Who would suppose that "The Hand of Destiny" could stoop to this? Even had the Filipinos at first proved themselves incompetent, which they did not, we had still no right to rob them of their political freedom. For, as President Eliot has observed: "Freedom means freedom to be feeble, foolish, and sinful in public affairs as well as freedom

to be strong, wise, and good." And bringing the matter still more clinchingly home: "It means," as the Hon. Moorfield Storey so aptly says, "Platt and Quay and Addicks and Hearst, as well as Washington and Adams and Schurz and Cleveland. It means Tammany Hall as well as Independence Hall."

To narrow the application still further, we do not teach our children to walk by picking them up and carrying them whenever they attempt to use their feet. Neither do we go about proclaiming that they are incapable of learning to walk. No, indeed; we let them use their own legs, and by tumbling find out how to keep from tumbling, exactly as we learned; and we are not over tumbling yet.

This is Nature's way of developing the bodies and minds of children, men, and nations, and all other violent and artificial methods are criminal and disastrous.

If we chose, we might give our sincerity on this point another test by asking ourselves—under oath—whether we should feel any inordinate solicitude concerning the political ability of the Filipinos were they able to command as many troops as we are.

"But if we don't take these islands, some other nation will," is the second text noticed and one whose validity any thief could match by saying: "If I don't pick this gentleman's pockets, some other knave will."

The third pretext enumerated, "We can't retreat, now that we have committed ourselves," can bear no closer inspection than its fellow sophistries. For it certainly cannot mean that a nation of eighty millions runs any risk of being charged with cowardice in discontinuing a war with a nation one-eighth its size. All that it can mean is a confession of false pride which prevents the admission that we made a mistake in thinking that a people as brave and intelli-

gent as their fighting and their two petitions prove the Filipinos to be, would be willing to exchange their independence for anything we have to offer, or thrust, upon them.

"But other nations have always done so," is the fourth reed upon which the expansionist leans. Had nations always done right, this consideration might have some weight; but when one remembers that every crime and folly known to mankind might likewise bolster itself by a quotation of precedents, the argument at once loses all its cogency. There was a long and ghastly line of precedents for the last sentence which burned a heretic at the stake. But no small part of the progress of men and nations is achieved by leaving undone those things which their ancestors ought not to have done.

Finally, when all his other arguments have been returned unto him void, the expansionist leans back in callous ease and irresponsi-

ble content upon those air-filled cushions of rhetoric: "The Finger of Fate," "The Hand of Destiny," and the "Supremacy of the Anglo-Saxon Race."

At this point in his logic, *hier sitze ich, ich kann nichts anders,* might well be the motto of the expansionist; for he has reached the jumping-off place in his reasoning demesne.

But some day truth will puncture these comfortable cushions of the man who abdicates his free moral agency, and the significance of such phrases as "The Hand of Destiny" and "The Finger of Fate" will suffer a terrible collapse.

Pending that happy day, war will continue to play her old rôle as tutor of crime, folly, fallacy, and deceit. Her entire logic, indeed, is practically condensed in the statement that twice two is four, but twice two thousand is not four thousand. In other words the violation of the sixth, eighth, ninth, and

tenth commandments, on a gigantic scale, entailing woe and desolation upon millions of people, is counted as a laudable performance, though the meed for the man who privately violates the same commandments on a very small scale (with no emoluments in view) is disgrace and death.

Also, as a minor corollary of war's main proposition, we have this interesting absurdity: nobody but an uncivilised boor would think of trespassing upon another man's premises and prolonging his stay after he had been politely and repeatedly requested to leave. *But,* if several thousand men commit the same trespass, and are as politely and repeatedly requested to leave, they may still stay and loot and lay waste and expect nothing but laurels from the country that incites and sanctions their vandalisms.

To such a system of logic the *non sequitur* of the inferential claims of victory offers a fitting conclusion: our side has killed more

men and done more damage than our enemy has; *therefore* (mark the close reasoning), therefore we are right and our enemy wrong.

Or, reduced to terms of private life: my neighbour and I have a dispute; I kill him and seize his goods; and that proves me right and him wrong.

This is the logic of war, first, last, and always; for war is simply duelling raised to the *n*th power.

Yet so-called civilised nations, gentlemen, forsooth, and men who call themselves Christians, are willing to barter the benedictions of peace and all the treasures accumulated by the ages for the tooth-and-claw tuition of the beasts that perish.

Was it, in truth, of beings capable of such brutish reversions that Hamlet exclaimed: "How noble in reason! How infinite in faculties! In form and moving how express and admirable! In action how like an angel!"

AT THE END OF THE RAINBOW

(Where there is no vision the people perish. —Isaiah.)

"What will you have? quoth God; pay for it and take it."—(Isaiah of Concord.)

In all the records of the Old Testament there is no more convincing internal evidence of historical authenticity than one finds in the painfully lifelike sarcasm of the brethren of Joseph: "And they said one to another, Behold this dreamer cometh. Come now therefore, let us slay him and cast him into some pit. . . . We shall see what will become of his dreams."

Through the thick partition of the centuries, the thin derisive laughter that accompanied the remark is distinctly audible to the mind's ear. Even the expression of dull

incredulity and envious cunning—the natural facial context of the sarcasm—has been accurately transmitted to us through a thousand other faces that through succeeding ages have worn a similar expression, produced by a similar cause.

Such were the jeering lips and eyes that greeted the world's greatest Dreamer, the poet whose dreams by the shore of Galilee were the foundation of a spiritual empire whose boundaries are one with eternity. And every lesser dreamer, in the long, heroic line from Columbus to Marconi, has reaped for the first harvest of his labour the galling jibes of ignorance. "We shall see what will become of his dreams," said the brethren of Joseph. They did see, and the sequel should have served as a warning to all who have since read the biblical history. But despite the fact that the world has been seeing ever since what becomes of dreams, it has sedulously imitated the example set by the breth-

ren of Joseph in its first treatment of every man with a vision. For the intellectual and moral chasm which lies between those who have visions and those who have not, is one of the most impassable of all the great divides that keep men strangers to each other though they touch elbows for a lifetime.

Even the bee, bird, and beaver are more *en rapport* with the dreamer than those of his own kind who can see nothing but accomplished facts. Like the grasshopper, the sense-bound man sees no fairy cups of golden nectar in a field of flowers. But the bee knows there is for him a pot of gold at the end of the meadow's flowery rainbow. And obedient to his vision he proceeds to search till he finds it. So, the bright-eyed bird sees in a stray piece of twine a vagrant wisp of hay and tufts of down, the dainty dwelling no man may duplicate until he foresees it with the bird's vision and fore-feels it with the bird's palpitating desire.

And the beaver no less unerringly builds his dam on the lines of the marvellous instinct vision with which he is endowed—seeing in branches, mud, moss, and stones the outward substance which shows the world the stuff that beavers' dreams are made of.

Fortunately for the bird, bee, and beaver, there is no need of any explanation to their own kind of their respective visions. But were the beaver brought into daily relations with the woodchuck and called upon to justify his daring vision of a dam, one might fancy the sceptical scorn with which the latter animal would greet the beaver's dreams. But the possibility of such a low mental state belongs to the higher race only. So we may fairly infer that no woodchuck ever laughed at a beaver's dreams, or told him that the only practical residence was a hole in the ground with two exits.

Considering the amiable solidarity of

vision that exists between all bees, all beavers, and all birds, and the equally tolerant attitude of each genus towards the different visions of every other, one feels a passing regret at the misapprehensions of the human race.

It is simply impossible to think of one bee buzzing to another: "Oh, you visionary insect! the utter absurdity of thinking you can make a wax-pot and fill it with honey." No, indeed; the moment we come upon such scorn, we may be sure we have entered the province of man. For if ever the bee had time to spare from the quest for his own pot of gold, one might expect him to watch with sympathetic interest and comprehension all his fellow-dreamers of the human race. To the poet would he not say: "Oho! big brother-sipper of the woods and fields; what kind of honey do you distil from the jewelled cups of flower-land?"

But magnify to a man's size the brain of

a bee, and I doubt not the bee would understand even more than the poet could tell him of the creation of the metrical cells that hold the Parnassian brand of honey. But for the poet to expect such comprehension from the man with no vision, were to expect the pink pulsations of the rose to be intelligible to the underground logic of the potato.

A perfect illustration of this Alpine barrier 'twixt man and man is given in "The Awakening of Helena Richie." In a moment of dreaming inadvertency, "Sam's Sam" had written upon a sheet of paper, whose other side he used for a business letter, those lines which so aptly measure the rushing sweep of poetic vision:

> "Was this the face that launched a thousand ships,
> And burnt the topless towers of Ilium?"

Promptly came the answer from the business firm to which the body but not the spirit of the letter was addressed:

At the End of the Rainbow

"Yours received. Accompanying remarks about ships not understood by our house."

Alas, that there are so many such houses in the world!

Nor is this a case in which fiction has rouged the face of fact. Not a day passes without a thousand unrecorded examples of misconnections as humourously pathetic. Scott confesses that when he was writing "The Lady of the Lake" his confidence was considerably shaken by a cousin who warned him not to be so "rash as to attempt to climb higher and incur the risk of a fall." Equally blind to the visions of their distinguished sons were the fathers of Tennyson, Flaubert, and hundreds of others endowed with the inner eye.

Fortunately for the world, there is ever some ear among all the deaf ones that finally catches the poet's song; some heart that knows that in all the world there is no one

so wide awake as the man who dreams and makes his dreams come true. Nor is this the only power of the man with a vision. By various readjustments of the telescopic lens of imagination, the dreamer is able to reduce all visible substance to the original dream-stuff from which it sprung. He thus discovers that the whole universe is only a more or less perfected manifestation of a divine dream. From the same focus the process which science veils with the name of Evolution is nothing less than a divine dream in whose fulfilment the human race is allowed to coöperate with its lesser visions —its dreams within a dream.

The man, therefore, whose life-work rests upon a vision is giving the world one of the strongest proofs of his kinship to his Maker. Following divine precedent, he revolves the mists of an idea until he has projected into space, in the form of a poem or painting, a cable, a railway system, a cathedral, or a

white city, the finite world evoked by his vision.

It should be remembered, however, that in the process of revolving the mists of his idea, the dreamer must always be orthodox on the point of faith and works, else his dreams will evaporate. Though he may not be able to command the faith which expects the literal removal of a mountain, he may generally offer in place of the mustard-seed brand of faith, a more effective modern substitute which removes the mountain by tunnelling under it.

Poetic fancy, then, is only lending a rosy gleam to fact in saying that there is a pot of gold at the end of every rainbow. For he who follows a rainbow vision and makes it come true may eventually exchange the accomplished dream for a pot of gold, to be reëxchanged for something infinitely better. Even the rainbow itself is guarantee to this fact. For what is it but a celestial dream

of beauty wrought of grey mists and sunshine as typically intangible as the dream-stuff used by the human painter or poet. Other beautiful symbolic pledges of the value of visions the spring orchard gives us in the rose and white dreams of the hardy, red fruit of autumn. Most absurdly impossible dreams the so-called practical man would say, had he never seen them realised. Yet not one whit more impossible than some of the dreams into which men have breathed the breath of life.

Closely scanned, the entire universe is a cosmic workshop packed with inexhaustible material for the execution of every conceivable kind of dream. Not only does Nature furnish a world of dream-stuff, but also most suggestive models to stimulate the dreamer to become a miracle-worker like herself.

"Come on, little man," she seems to say, "watch me blow the pollen of this dark corn

over to yonder field of light, performing a harmless cereal intermarriage of black and white. Does it give you no clue for experiments of your own?"

And man's answer to his dear, old Mother's challenge is the world of horticultural marvels whose latest culmination is the wonderland of Burbank.

"Will you play dreams with me again?" asks Nature, "and use my marble to foster and perpetuate the religious visions that lift the veil between the seen and the unseen?" And again man answers the challenge with Saint Mark's, Saint Peter's, Milan, Cologne, and a hundred other cathedrals that stand for the Mt. Blancs and Himalayas of man's little cosmos.

And so for ever and ever the challenge goes on—Nature freely offering everything in earth, sea, and sky, from poppy-seeds to planets, to the man who can weave them into his dreams.

At the End of the Rainbow

Examining the finished products of human vision, one discovers them naturally falling into two great classes, private and universal. To the first class belong all those visions whose object is the welfare of the dreamer and his nearest kin; in the second, those whose aim is the welfare of the entire human race. Such are Democracy, Universal Languages, Interplanetary Communication, Universal Arbitration, Universal Peace, Universal Tolerance, Universal Brotherhood, and Immortality—dreams with so large a foundation that generation after generation may work upon them and still leave them unfinished.

And these universal dreams of man are most exquisitely prefigured by Nature in the methods by which coral is made. As the calcareous deposits of former generations of zoöphytes furnish the base to which those of their offspring are attached, so the unfinished dream of one human generation

serves as a base for the achievement of the next.

Again, both private and universal dreams are redivisible according to the substance used in their fulfilment into material and spiritual dreams. Nearly all the earliest dreams of the human race were of the former kind, answering to crying needs in the present tense. But no great dream can stay in the present tense. As the ages passed, not only were the visions of the spirit awakened, but gradually the material medium used in developing the other kind of dream has grown finer and finer till, in electricity, it seemed to reach the point where matter and spirit are merged. And always in the evolution of dreams has man discovered that the more delicate the outward fabric of his dream-stuff the more powerful were its results.

The quiet, elusive agent that outwings Mercury as a message-bearer for man, and

mimics the starry chandeliers, can also pull heavy cars or give the volt of Nemesis to the criminal in the chair of death. Another illustration of the same union of delicacy and power is furnished by the material used by the audacious dreamer who lured a heavenly body to go into partnership with him in the interplanetary business of photography. Of similar elusiveness and power are the dreams of musicians wrought out by means of intangible vibrations of varying rapidity indicated by absurdly immaterial little dots called notes. Yet who may tell us how many destinies of nations have been changed by the position of those little dots?

How comparatively insignificant, too, the paltry layers of pigment employed by the painter, or the frugal lines used by the etcher in the outward embodiment of his dreams. Most trivial, also, to all seeming, is the material substance of the alphabet—a few little

inky quirks—with which to develop the stupendous dream to which it gives existence.

Yet even with the marvellous dreams wrought out of these most etherealised forms of matter, the soul of man is not satisfied. Finer and finer grow the outlines of his vision until he gropes toward the fulfilment of his greatest dream in the quest of the ideal. Here at last the dreamer discards even the finest tools of matter for the wholly invisible implements of spirit. Working with the substance of things hoped for, he evolves character on the outlines of his ideal from the chaos and dark night of his own soul.

In the realisation of this dream all other dreams are as vassal bees to their queen. Even the perfected visions of the Almighty wait upon this greatest dream of man. Mountain, sea, and star challenge him to match in himself their strength, sublimity,

and purity; and every bird and blossom along his way offers some suggestion of grace and beauty to the dreamer in quest of the ideal. Many a hint, too, he gathers from fellow-dreamers of history and fiction, past and present, paying his debt in kind, perchance, to succeeding generations. Beyond all computation, also, are the debts of gratitude which the dreamer owes the poet, the great architect of ideals.

Yet the poet's influence, like that of rain and dew, keeps no account of its ministrations, though it may have straightened the crooked outlines and faulty perspective of the ideals of thousands of dreamers. We have elaborate statistics of our material progress, measured in bushels, bales, or dollars. But no bureau has ever furnished us with a census of the yearly increase in our spiritual acreage due to poetical tillage. Neither have we any official report of the statelier mansions of the soul whose outlines

were draughted by the poets. "We must be more beautiful than ourselves," writes Maeterlinck; "we shall never distance our souls."

Minutely examining the assistance which the poets render the idealist, one finds an interesting parallel of the specialism which obtains in the more material world of endeavour. As a hundred different kinds of talent and genius may be employed in building a great cathedral, so the dreamer needs a hundred kinds of qualities, substantial and ornamental, in the architecture of his ideal. To meet this very need are hundreds of poets, each polishing the facets of some particular virtue or grace.

For the altitude of his ideal what better chart could the dreamer have than Wordsworth gives him in his "Ode to Duty," or its briefer rendering, furnished by our own great surveyor of spiritual orbits:

"So nigh is grandeur to our dust,
So near is God to man,
When Duty whispers low, *Thou must,*
The youth replies, *I can.*"

Or, if the dreamer choose, he may take the quatrain in a prose maxim, with the poetry still lurking in the folds of its scanter garment: "Hitch your wagon to a star."

Tennyson is another specialist in large dimensions that have done—one may never know how much—to bring the statelier Eden back to man. "The Princess," "In Memoriam," and "Launcelot and Guinevere," are especially full of celestial fingerposts for the traveller along the Via Lucis. And the Psalms of David and the lyrics of the New Testament, how many an idealist have they made of horny-handed readers who have knelt to find the dwelling-place that is throughout all generations. In a word, there is hardly a fine quality which the dreamer needs to perfect his ideal whose lure

has not been strengthened by the stanzas of some poet:

> "It matters not how strait the gate,
> How charged with punishments the scroll:
> I am the master of my fate;
> I am the captain of my soul."

So sang Henley, and a thousand other hearts in consequence have risen more courageously from the night that covers them. Even charity, yet glowing from the matchless setting given it by Paul, could still take on fresh tints of beauty from the hands of Hood, Burns, and Whittier. For every generation sees a little farther at both ends of the moral solar spectrum. Ultra-violet virtues and vices invisible to Moses or Paul are visible to the Nineteenth-Century poet. "The Decalogue" has no specialised commandment for women, but Coventry Patmore thus beautifully atones for so grave an oversight:

"Ah, wasteful woman!—she who may
On her sweet self set her own price,
Knowing he cannot choose but pay—
How has she cheapened Paradise!
How given for naught her priceless gift,
How spoiled the bread and spilled the wine,
Which, spent with due, respective thrift,
Had made brutes men, and men divine!"

In addition to all the service rendered by the poet-specialists, there are a few others, a very few, who have duplicated the wisdom of the "all-round family doctor" who out-specialises the specialist on his own ground. Not only are all the virtues seductively embodied in Shakespeare's characters, but the vices are also so lifelike that their repulsive force is about as great as the attractive force of the virtues. Caliban, Falstaff, Goneril, and Regan might warn one as far along the paths of righteousness as one could be coaxed by Portia, Cordelia, Imogene, and Hamlet.

Finally, after the idealist has made all due obeisance to the poets, the pulpit, and the

Press in general, a greater debt is still unacknowledged. Most of all in the quest of the ideal does the dreamer find the boundaries of his hopes and aspirations enlarged and illuminated by love. For no other experience of life gives him such a microscopic view of his own defects or such a telescopic vision of the far-off horizons to which he would attain. Under the influence of this perennial miracle, he sees himself with four, nay, with eight, eyes: his own eyes that see him as he is; his eyes that see him as he would be; the eyes of another that see him as he is; and the other eyes that see him as the other is fain he would be. However much he may have aspired and striven before he loved and was loved, he now finds his incentives doubled and quadrupled.

To escape the shame of feeling one whit less worthy than the other heart believes him, he would move heaven and earth to be better than the best possible belief, thereby

justifying the best possible belief. And in all deep and lasting affection, this experience is reciprocal. On the other hand, few agencies are more destructive of ideals than the various moth, firefly, and butterfly emotions that masquerade under the name of love.

But the idealist does not stop with the countless experiences which his five senses garner from a temporal universe. Overleaping the bounds of space and time, his prayers invoke invisible sources to mend the faulty outlines of his ideal. And when at last the greatest world-dream of man is finished, Death takes the dreamer to another world, filled, perchance, with dream-stuff still finer than the finest fabric of his earthly visions.

MODERN LETTER-WRITING

At least half a dozen times a year, to state the matter moderately, I find something in a newspaper or magazine which I file away on my list of Things That Aren't So. This opportunity, of course, presents itself more often than half a dozen times a year; but it is only significant things that are not so which win a place in my collection of Unprosecuted Slanders.

Merely personal libels, empty political mendacity, and the frivolous masqueradings of those who have nothing to do but be "in society," are not entered in my Peerage of Titled Prevarications. But of universal arraignments, based upon the evidence of things not seen or known, or lying within the

realm of the knowable, I keep a careful list, whose nature is indicated by these examples:

"Letter-writing has become a lost art."
"People don't make love any more."
"Sentiment is a lost art."
"People don't read poetry any more."
"Nobody is writing anything worth while these days."
"There are no more nice old ladies."

So much might be said on each one of these subjects that this paper will consider the first one only.

The first time this misstatement caught my eye, it raised a small crop of interrogations in my mental zone of doubt. For how, thought I, can a man get data for such an assertion? Can he practise a kind of colossal clairvoyance upon the mailbags that are hourly passing from state to state, from continent to continent, and to the remotest islands of the sea? Do these bold declaimers

get a chance to read the millions of letters that pass between sweethearts, husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters and friends?

And swiftly the answer came, not this time from the zone of doubt, but from the narrower belt of certainty: Such defamers "speak that which is not." For the lover, worthy to evoke the finest and holiest poetry of passion, would be the last person to violate its written confidences. The most beautiful letters, consequently, by very virtue of the conditions which make them the most beautiful, are forever protected from public scrutiny.

That material for thousands of volumes of correspondence, more beautiful than any which has been vandalised in the past, has proved the nobility of its source and inspiration by the trial by fire I have not the smallest doubt. Yet the only visible proof which any man or woman could give to support

this theory is one which no honourable man or woman could be induced to give. It is never a man or woman capable of inspiring fine letters who makes the assertion that no more good letters are written. Or, to give the left profile of the same fact, letters that palpitate with the warm heart-beats of their writer, that carry the finest fragrance which the spirit can distil from a passion that is not only strong but pure, such letters, as a rule, do not go to or come from a man of two or two and a half dimensions.

From what we know of the secular correspondence of Lowell, Emerson, and Stevenson, it is not difficult for the imagination to construct the illuminated pages of their correspondence which were meant for one pair of eyes only. Can one doubt for a moment the poetical glow that warmed and lighted the pages of the most intimate correspondence of a man who could write impersonally like this:

"But be our experience in particulars what it may, no man ever forgot the visitations of that power to his heart and brain, which created all things new; which was the dawn in him of music, poetry, and art; which made the face of nature radiant with purple light; the morning and the night varied enchantments; when a single tone of one voice could make the heart beat, and the most trivial circumstance associated with one form, is put in the amber of memory; when we became all eye when one was present, and all memory when one was gone; when the youth becomes a watcher of windows, and studious of a glove, a veil, a ribbon, or the wheels of a carriage; when no place is too solitary, and none too silent for him who has richer company and sweeter conversation in his new thoughts, than any old friends, though best and purest, can give him; for the figures, the motions, the words of the beloved object are not like other images written in water, but, as Plutarch said, 'enamelled in fire,' and make the study of midnight."

And yet I suppose the purblind people who have accused Emerson of coldness,

might still refuse to their imaginations (?) the probability I have suggested. Even with the evidence just quoted, accessible to everybody, there are people whose ideas have been so erroneously preconceived that it would simply be impossible for them to think of Emerson as "studious of a glove, a veil, or a ribbon."

So crustaceous are the prejudices of mankind!

Nor should it be inferred that it is only members of the "higher classes"—intellectually and morally speaking—who write each other good letters. For aught you know, the maid in your kitchen, who blushed so shyly when you surprised her, pen in hand, may have distilled the choicest dew of sentiment into the little missive which she had just addressed to her "friend," Mr. Dennis O'Rourke. And I, for one, take much comfort in the thought that there is something thought and felt, among the high

and low, that persistently evades and always will, I hope, the desecration of the literary market-place.

Even the sceptical raillery of a pedagogue—full of light and fancy—to whom I laid bare my optimism on this subject, fails to unconvince me.

"Among my correspondents," writes this genial dissenter, "there are precious few whose literary creations would serve to help the defendant in a case of this kind. I exclude X.—and one other master of the art—Mr. Aldrich, whose letters are veritable pieces of literature. The 'uninformed pessimist' is not thinking of the letters of X. and Thomas Bailey Aldrich when he says the art is in a 'state of decay.' He has in mind the correspondence carried on by Maisie Marshmallow and Gladys Gumdrop, or Jack Cavendish and his parents, or (I say it softly, as it were a secret) Z. and Y. A hundred years ago Z. and Y. would have sat down to a letter after hours of meditation and prayer, each with a three-months' store of news and gossip to

communicate, and the letter begun on Monday would be kept warm until Saturday—'breakfasts at five o'clock tea and dines on the following day'—Snark style. Nowadays one wants to write a letter in the same spirit of carelessness as one brushes one's hair—I mean in cases where the hair is abundant like my own.

"I don't know where I could find a letter of mine whose merit had kept it alive. You see Mrs. —— was a near neighbour of mine and all our exchange of thoughts was recorded in the *liber amoris,* which is the property of Cupid, whose address I have lost. . . .

"Tell —— not to yield himself too readily to 'Gallic bonds,' as Dobson calls them. I notice that all his verses are cast in the triolet form. A triolet can no more carry a serious thought than a buttercup can carry coal. Not that I am entirely opposed to the various tempting French forms of verse; they have their proper place and use, as Dobson has conclusively proven; but somehow the youthful bard in America (I speak from experience) is apt to put the Heliconian draught in the wrong cup made in France.

"D.'s gratitude in escaping an awkward

name is natural. In my direct line there is a biblical gem—Peleg—rarer than her Job, but hardly so distinguished. Those early Colonials were much given to this sort of amusement—they practically exhausted the Old Testament's 'Who's Who.' The muster-roll of an ancient military company is as humourous as it is painful. . . ."

The writer of this letter having so gracefully turned state's evidence against himself, nothing more need be said, unless it be to demur at the proposition that people are thinking of the Marshmallow and Gumdrop kind of letter when they assert that letter-writing is a lost art. Why should they be thinking of the Gumdrops and Marshmallows? They do not deserve so much consideration. Moreover, there are no more Gumdroppers and Marshmallows to the fore than there ever were. We simply have no record of their written inanities of bygone days. If the descendants of the ancient Maisies and Gladyses have enlarged their mental and

spiritual horizons,—as we can hardly avoid believing,—their letters must inevitably reflect the enlargement. As for the descendants of the other class of letter-writers, there is ground for a still larger hope.

But to return to the initial end of my subject, the proof of the existence of the finest kind of letter may confidently be left to the higher logic of the imagination, while more tangible evidence will be given of the existence of good letters of the secular type, which pass between kindred and friends not poetically stimulated with Cupid's nectar. The fact that they are merely secular and friendly justifies their publication.

The letters here given were all written within the last two or three years and they were nearly all written to the same woman, whom we may call Miss Dexter, since that is not her name. The letters are, of course, published with the consent of their writers. They might, moreover, be duplicated several

times over from the correspondence from which they were taken.

Nor is there any reason for believing that an equally good handful of letters might not be culled from the correspondence of thousands of other people, the friends of the friends of Miss Dexter, let us say.

The first two letters given are from a college-boy to his aunt:

MY DEAR AUNT:—

The willing spirit has all but written you more than once since the literary pole shifted northward, but the old, frail flesh still hangs a dead weight on the free motions of the spirit. Or, shall I not rather quote your favourite essay to the effect that "I am constrained every moment to acknowledge a higher origin for events than the will I call mine"?

What a delightful wall determinism, divine or diabolic, raises for the indolent man to lie in the shade of!

Lying in this shade, I cannot work myself up to the pitch of indignation even on the sub-

ject of war. Is there any ground for hope—that is the appalling question—for a youth who preserves his animal indifference in the presence—of an active volcano? Can such a youth, I say, ever hope to catch fire, or must he remain forever in that condemnable (note the refined form of the word) category of those neither hot nor cold, whom Saint Paul tells that he won't play in their yard?

The same indifference, along with other causes, keeps my stories in seclusion. Must the first blush of maidenly artistry be quenched by the cold water of bread and butter considerations? Must the first bud of the literary rosebush be mowed down by the frosty fangs of the carnivorous shearsman? No; let us live for art! Let us immolate ourselves for our chosen calling, offer up our heart's best choctaw before the Moloch of oblivion and be no less dead to the world than the world is to us.

I've been camping and it's a rain-story. When it rained quite too hard for tolerance we withdrew to the tents and smoked some and read some nice south-slope, sunshiny book like "Rudder Grange." Then—as sometimes happened—if the storms invaded the sanctity of our tents, we withdrew to the inviolable

stronghold of our hearts and always found it dry and warm (dum fine sentiment). Fact is, I had the best time that this close-fisted Mundane Life ever handed out. We just made old Dame Fortune stand and deliver, like a lady.

But perhaps I've gushed enough over the details of this particular Belshazzaring. I tell it because it dovetails very neatly into that very comfortable summer philosophy, "enjoy yourselves." It's so easy now to persuade oneself that everybody has a right, forgetting sin and damnation, to feel now and then the *joie de vivre,* to be what the Norwegians call a "life-glad man." Reality, with the furrowed brow and the "brown taste in the mouth," stares one in the face soon enough afterwards anyway, the Lord knows. By the way, are you an Ibsenian? or are you antiibsenese? I've just got his works and am up to the ears in them. He won't have any readers dallying with him; it's a case of the "wedding guest stands still and listens like a three years' child." It's off coat and waistcoat! off hide! open ribs and diaphragm, is there a heart in this body or is there not? You see I have it bad.

Modern Letter-Writing

The Touchstone came several days ago, and I feel like a goat not to have acknowledged it before. But Emerson has his opinion of people who are always apologising. I have mine, too, of people who are always putting themselves under obligations to apologise; but heavens, a man can't spend all his time saying he's sorry. I was very glad to get the book, I've heard so much about Mrs. Wharton, *id est,* you gave her such high approbation. I have read only about a third of the book as yet, so I can't discuss the story, but she certainly has a style. My only question is, hasn't she sometimes too much style? *e. g.,* the ordinary mortal would say, "as chance would have it (or *so etwas*) the lamplight fell on a photograph of Alexa Trent." Mrs. Wharton says, "The tacit connivance of the inanimate had centred the lamplight," and I am sensible that her expression is more accurate and more suggestive, and now and then a phrase like that is good. But one doesn't like everything said in that difficult way. Here's another: "He was conscious of a duality of intention wherein his apparent wish to leave revealed itself as a last effort of the will against the overmastering desire to stay." These are

merely random excerpts. Surely, Mrs. Wharton, in daily life, would not say that she "was conscious of a duality of intention wherein her apparent wish to save two dollars revealed itself as a last effort of the will against the overmastering desire to buy a pair of kid gloves." But there are a lot of fine things in the book. What do you think of the man's culpability? In the face of these moral torments, isn't it strange how loath the Hell-fire-ites are to believe that men are able to work out their own damnation without the aid of any post-mortem fireworks?

No, I haven't any exhibit of poems on hand at present. I hope, this summer, to drink Helicon mineral water, steadily, and write sonnets. I wish we might have some confabulations in the course of these days, but "A god their severance ruled," as the poick saith. The only redress is to declare that the mail system of Uncle Sam has conquered the wilderness of Javels.

Affectionately yours,

DICK.

MY DEAR AUNT:—

My shamefast heart tells me that I am no gentleman; but I answer back with some show

of reason that my heart is a liar. When one contemplates writing to a littérateur, one wants to choose one's times and seasons, so that one's thoughts and one's expressions may have time to smooth their hair and straighten their cravat before entering The Presence. Doesn't one?

Well, one hasn't spotted any such opportunity yet, so you will have to pardon one's négligé as one dashes off a bit of a note at the end of the day.

It is some time ago that "The Gentle Reader" dropped in, and I haven't acknowledged his arrival yet. He is a delightful guest and shall always occupy a place of honour in my establishment. I had dipped into his pages a few days ago, at your suggestion, and had sent my roommate to him with resulting enthusiasm. I'm afraid I shall have to go and hear him preach, though the summer's vacation has nearly worn me out. Camping is supposed to be a recreation, but the "labourers were few," and—and I fell into nearly all the positions vacant for men servants and maid servants. I know that I was engaged, either with kettle and frying-pan or with hammer and axe, pretty nearly twelve hours per diem. When

a momentary lull came, some one wanted to take a hand at cards, or go for a walk. I had a nice little bag of books along, which I had dreamed of reading on the long afternoons under the spruces. Reading, bit by bit, at every opportunity, I accomplished in two weeks one comedy of Congrève's, and half of the "Egoist." To be sure, the "Egoist" is not the rapidest reading in the world. It goes down better in small portions, two or three chapters at a time, like a handful of dates after dinner. Then while you are reading it, you have that delightful "Lord-I-thank-thee-that-I-am-not-as-other-men-are" sensation. As I have done so little in it, the summer has been very unsatisfactory, *nous y voilà*—rusting in every cog of our soul—this "capability and godlike reason fusting in us unused." Still my soul has been brooding over a nest of characters all summer. I see them well enough and their inane motions. But they are slow to pick the shell.

However, do-nothingness sometimes pays. Do you know those little stanzas of Stevenson's?

"A river that from morn to night
Down all the valley plays the fool;

Not once she pauses in her flight
  Nor knows the comfort of a pool;

But still keeps up, by straight or bend,
  The self-same pace she hath begun—
Still hurry, hurry, to the end—
  Good God, is that the way to run?"

Yes, I've seen Cousin Prue. She is indeed, One. We had a very pleasant hour and a half around the corner. However wearing school-teaching may be, it certainly seems to give edge and flash to the spirit—of course, pre-supposing there's some temper to the metal to begin with. That noble brotherhood and sisterhood I am expecting 'twill be my destiny to join. That's about all I can tell you of my intentions and prospects. "Digging and Destiny": you summarise the situation so far as I am concerned, though you speak with far more assurance of my future than I should dare to. I haven't the faintest idea what's next. Ultimately, the gods willing, I expect to teach English in some institution—preferably not a loonatick asylum. The weird sisters are mum to all my interrogations and sometimes vex me with their set-toothed taciturnity.

In this "bleak magnificence of hope" your

letters are oases in the desert—the figure is somewhat ancient—water-brooks for the hart; and that poem about "the dog in the hammock, the cat in the lake and the difference it makes," is one of the most splendid and consolatory bits of verse produced in the twentieth century. As for the "snail and the thorn and God"—*à la* Browning, I think, *entre nous,* they are now eclipsed.

Which reminds me, I have an ancient verse, which I composed after a sojourn in the woods. I give you two out of six stanzas. You escape easily:

The man cried unto his God:
  The sweetness of earth has fled;
O'er the world and its waters broad
  The voice of the child is dead.

'Twere better for us to cease,
  Into primeval chaos hurled.
We have broken the pristine peace,
  We have marred thy perfect world.

With hearty good wishes for the New Year, I renew my vow of allegiance, and thereunto affix my official seal.

Dootifully your nephew,

DICK.

Modern Letter-Writing

My dear Miss Dexter:—

Your last letter I have read several times for its humour and the way you "sail into me." I should rather have a humourous opponent than a serious disciple. Disciple! pshaw—but that is taking one's self seriously. Of course, with passionate gaiety, I dissent from many of the things in your letter.

I can't help thinking that you like to take the comfortable view of the end and aim of things. You like the positive because it bolsters up the illusions of your own special ego. You are still heavily veiled. You would wince if your ideals were to be taken from you and nothing substituted for them. I have grown accustomed to the dark—am a sort of nyctalops, and hope for annihilation of personality. Have you never felt it a sin just to live?

As to the evolving God you speak of, I see no special merit in a process that reduces a concretion to an abstraction and whittles away the real living God of the aborigine to the fine disappearing nullity of a Spinoza, who turns his heel upon "the cry of the human."

It is true that the feelings are conditioned by one's physical state; but as William James has asked, "Why is not a truth born at a bod-

ily state 103 Fahrenheit as valid as a truth at 98 Fahr.?" All poets and most thinkers are sick souls, and the fact that Nietzsche ended his days in a madhouse is no more significant than the fact that Emerson couldn't recognise his friends toward the end, or that Tasso was a chained-up lunatic, or that Maupassant died of paresis. There is no relation between health and truth, though there is between health and illusion, and I mean to develop that thesis some day with a vengeance.

I can write in only one way—the way I feel. I was born a somnambule—this world is not real. I do not accept the universe nor a single item of it. I feel that life is an insult to my intelligence—life on these terms. As a spectacle it is superb. The universe should be conserved for purely æsthetic reasons. But morally it is Eternity's Black Hole of Calcutta. I indict life *qua* life, not any particular phase of it. I am a rhapsodist in the woods and by the running stream; but do you think those masks can fool me? I have visions that stretch beyond this revolving green pebble—this lazar-house, whose walls bloom anew each spring with most fantastic creepers and flowers, white and red. I pant

for that which never was on sea or land—it lies out of time, out of space. I have withdrawn from the world's stews and live on Olympus, aiming at the spiritual condition attained by Spinoza and De Vigny.

Forgive my heat. Oh, if you knew the humbug of the cosmos!

Sincerely,

LUCIFER.

P. S.—You are exactly right: some of my roses are "wired on." I have a drawerful of pensées—and from them I draw my water—or, rather, please, nitroglycerine. Still, though "wired on," they are not paper.

P. S. S.—I have read —— —— several times. Do it again. You know you are on a precipice there?—and how I adore a precipice! How I love the hair-breadth escapes of the soul! If you do another thing with such ethical insinuations . . . your soul will be in danger, and that will be simply scrumptious. Nothing so titillates me as to feel that a N. E. soul is going to be damned. I love Hawthorne and Alcott and R. W. E. because I am certain that they are in—well, well.

Modern Letter-Writing

My dear Miss Dexter:—

Your pretty card is before me as I write; but what I shall write is neither before me nor in any explored part of my cosmos.

Concerning your literary problem, I have an uncomfortable feeling that there may be those wiser than I, therefore you should take your "chooce," without fear of hurting my feelings. Doesn't that leave me fronting South by North? 'Tis designed to.

It must be nice to have real brains under one's hair. It mustn't be so nice to see the sales of a slush-gush time-waster pass the hundred thousand line in a few weeks, when you and I know that the author doesn't know enough to teach an infant class, ain't it?

I have been taking up Italian for a study this winter. I shall probably soon lay it down again without injury, but it sounds well to take it up, you know. The Latin roots are all there, if one can scrape away the barbarous suffixes. But as I have only a French spade to dig 'em with, I can't always tell a turnip from a carrot when it's unearthed. A knowledge of Italian will do me little good in this life, but it may come handy in the next,

since most of the popes were Italians and led reproachable lives.

I have also been "doing" the poems of Joe Quinn Miller. There's more red blood in the veins of Joe than in the whole New England outfit. As to the poet you loaned me, I am sorry to range myself in opposition to the voice of England and America as well as the most interesting part of ——; but it must be so until you can spare time to set me right. Convince me and I'll unsay anything. Till then, the poetical works of —— must remain for me in that choice galaxy in which Tupper and the Sweet Singer of Michigan are specially luminous. How bad —— would feel. Forgive me for him. Consider my youth and innocent lamblikeness.

There is something terribly wooden in much of what passes as our best verse. The struggles of the versifier are so apparent at times that appreciation is lost in pity. Why doesn't somebody teach the world that rhyme should not be used when it is not needed? Unless in reading aloud it is felt that the music, or sense, or both require it, rhyme is better omitted. A certain emphasis of pitch, stress, quantity, or a slight pause, perhaps, is necessary to

call attention to the rhyme, and when the sensitive reader feels that this emphasis is misplaced, he reads his poetry as prose or blank verse.

I have found the necessity of observing remote and unneeded rhymes a distinct hindrance to my enjoyment of much of the best of modern verse. Browning is a shining example, and were Swinburne not a pronounced verbal acrobat, I should say he is even shinier. I am admonished that rhymes should be read as though they were not; "the books say so." Books be hanged! Rhyme appeals almost entirely to the ear, nothing to the eye. If the ear finds it superfluous, it is superfluous. Browning's "Pheidippides" is a case in point, eight lined hexameters rhyming 1-7, 2-8, 3-6, 4-5. What ear appreciates the music of the metre, when it must hold 1 and 2 in abeyance until 7 and 8 come to close the sequence, to say nothing of the intermediate lines, and that unimportant matter, the meaning!

To exemplify the above-assassinated idea, I enclose a poetical nightmare. My victim is a Frenchman, not the possessor of a New England conscience or any other. I don't try to translate literally, trying to say what he

might have tried to say in English upon the theme when in the mood, if equipped with my mental vacuity.

Don't return it;
You may burn it,
Gol durn it!

I can rhyme if I try, you see.

Forgive all this. It does not make a summer. I wish it did, for three thermometers on or near Lake Street gave the temperature of yesterday, A. M., as 54 minus. Spirit thermometers, though presumably sober.

Bye,

THERON.

P. S.—If it comes handy, I wish you would try Loti's "Roman d'un Enfant" and "Madame Chrysanthème." The first of these fascinates me—want to smile and weep at once. Can't quite relish the other. New England notions of morality will obtrude.

There are times when I wish I were one of the great majority of my kind, those dear people who can find their level with almost any one, anywhere,—easily pleased and easily pleasing; whose thoughts lie as naturally on the surface as the lily on the pond, troubling

themselves not at all with the roots of things, seeing the sky over their heads but a span beyond the tree tops, the universe easily measurable with a few scoops of their private ladles.

Something of this comes to me often when I meet a man who looks promising, but who, after sounding, proves as fordable as the rest. A real man is not so common; the best of them have not time to be real, being in pursuit of what they are pleased to call success.

Which reminds me—I don't know how—of an article I recently read, entitled, "Was Thoreau a Lover of Nature?" I expect to see in the next *Christian Witness* an article entitled "Do Unitarians Go to Hell?"

MEXICO CITY.

MY DEAR MISS DEXTER:—

Here I am out here, the mountains all around me; a climate that is nothing less than poetical (we are eight thousand feet above sea-level); a city picturesque, as old as Aztec memory, modern, beautiful, bohemian, æsthetic—in fact, *un petit Paris.* The scenery around is more beautiful than a Belasco stage setting—and more real.

Modern Letter-Writing

I am engulfed in business, and am feeling fine, normally abnormal, have an abounding sense of humour, a correct perspective of The Nothing, and have carried here with me my ineradicable taint, as you would say (or was it Georgy Byron?).

I came down on a —— liner; romantic tropic nights, with the full moon o'erhead, placid seas by day, and never a touch of *mal de mer*. Eight days on old ocean! something new for me—and never to be forgotten. No land from the Jersey Highlands to Palm Beach; the eternal pump of the screw; parchesi with a charming lady; a little of Shelley's "Prometheus Unbound"—always hidden in my pocket—sometimes Dixie and sometimes Suwanee River at night under the Dipper by us gringos—and then the rise in the early morning, with the sea air kissing one with a very pantheistic fervour.

Havana; old duenna drawing her veil over her face before the young braggart of the North U. S., a sleepy sea child caught in trolley poles and wires—so sad, so old—so beautiful.

Progreso! sharks, sharks, and yellow fever!

Vera Cruz—unspeakable. Vultures! Vultures! Vultures of all kinds.

Then the ascent (twelve hours) to Mexico City—a sight never to be forgotten. At one time the train literally hung three thousand feet over Maltrato. Pen cannot describe that vision with Orizaba and Popocatepetl, with their everlasting palls of snow, in the distance. . . . Now what have you been doing?

Please do not send back anything I enclose in a letter or otherwise. You have been twice guilty. Dear, dear, that Puritan konscience of yourn! You have such a fine sense of meum and tuum. You must study Brother Alcott—a dear old transcendental thief!

. . . My rebellion is no less. No, indeed; I have only drawn off for breakfast like Dewey at Manila. Dissent (writ big) is the dominating root of this tree; but that is not to say that never a rose blooms here. Everything has voted in my Republic, but I am not a democrat, I am, if anything, an aristocratic anarchist, with a profound belief (nay, knowledge) of reincarnations. But why is anything?—that it is that keeps me bowling along from carnation to carnation—my fever to know why? I care nothing for the how.

Science doesn't interest me. I would not exchange the "Dhamapada" for the "Origin of Species"—not even for George Fred Williams's sake.

And to conclude, I hate to think of the consequences if you had had a straight Puritan ancestry—but there is a strain of Montaigne in you, and thanks to the gods for that. It has saved you from absolute N. E.-ship.

Sincerely,

LUCIFER.

MY DEAR SISTER-AUNT:—

If I appeared rather Stygian—navy-coloured, Monday—it was because of my physical condition and not from any deep-seated sense of modesty, *quorum non pars.* Truly, I have a wholesome and profound respect for myself when I consider what a well-meaning creature I am. Hence, indirectly, I have come to respect all my fellow scramblers, through contemplating my own virtue. I haven't had any long-standing notion that I was an adventitious bud. No siree! The Lord fulfils himself in many ways (Tennyson thunk this thought before me) and I suppose I am part of the filling. But after a bad night I have a

sneaking feeling that the most up-to-date Boston-flavoured cook-book wasn't used, but one of Mrs. Noah's water-soaked, smelly kinds. So I fuss.

Satis est of that.

Please don't be returning any more slips of blue paper, or other coloured schemes. Keep 'em till I get to the lavender-ribbon and lace-cap stage. I'd rather not have it now; I am too much like Oliver Goldsmith in my spend-thriftiness without any of his positive virtues. This comparison comes up so easily because I turned the Sabbath afternoon into stationary gazing at Irving's Life of G. It left me with a wish that I might have been there and helped the poor rascal—spend.

But I haven't told you of the reddest-lettered day of my calendar. Cousin S—— was so kind as to invite me to see "Hamlet" at Sander's theatre, and I felt like a colt out of pasture, and frisked and rollicked accordingly. I don't feel much acquainted with S—— yet, but extended visits are not necessary to see his quality.

I was so optimistic as to hope that aunt's telegram would land you in ——, and had forthwith built a good many castles in the

air. But instead you are way up in ——, where my vision sees you driven to warm corners, rather than to the preferred communion with trees and songsters. Aren't the roads juicy and lumpy up there now, or is that memory filched from my antediluvian days at ——? My own bird walks, that I had so much anticipated, have been bleak affairs, for the birds stay buried in cosiness, while I spatted my hands *à la* milkman to keep up the circulation.

I have been devouring George Eliot's life. The number of religious books she swallowed has appalled me and leads me to rebuke with more than usual vigour those hard-shelled urchins in school who flop their hands wildly —as if charged with a vital discovery—to ask baldly if she was not an infidel. I shout such a big no at them that they retreat into their holes in hot haste. If this weren't the age of predigested foods, art-talks, and religion, I should feel dismayed that I hadn't read more *à propos* the subject; but yet I feel that we were born near the place where she left off in some of her religious doubts—like handicap racers.

Yes, I marvel at B——'s courage in shak-

ing off her native land. I curse the weather here, and yet, like a doting youngster, I cling on, 'cause flesh and blood and associations are so vital a part of this existence—and the next? I know very well the sensations you describe as you saw the flatness of nature's anatomy on the plains. It grips a New Englander keenly; that, with other indiscretions in colour-tinting, makes me wonder at the temerity of those who give up forever the green hills of New England.

Don't worry about my robustness; Samson was a fresh-air child beside me.

Let this long letter amend my long silence, which is not indicative of coolness, but of a trustful warmth. Where there is understanding of each other I 'low there may be lacunæ of thought and expression more telling than a dictionary set agoing.

Yours, while this machine is to her,

WILMA.

MY DEAR ELIZABETH GREGORY DEXTER:—

This Quaker salutation is not impertinence—it is pure pertinence—intended as a tribute to your personality, beyond the necessity of conventional designation.

But I have forgotten to say grace—as we must, of course, agree with our beloved Charles Lamb, who wanted "grace for twenty other occasions—a form for setting out on a pleasant walk"—and why not for letters, those long-distance and delightful touches of mind on mind?

Perhaps I told you, that I am getting over brain-fag and the eye-strain that goes with it; but somewhere back of these two fags my tremendous mental energy keeps me unhappy because I cannot do all the things I want to. It is that brisk old French great-grandmother of mine, coming to the front, again, and again.

All this is obtruded because I am sensitive lest you should attach a ghost of blame to me for negligence.

That woodcut shows my father's old bookstore. We count it the best event of our lives to have been born with a bookstore as a background. The first book that my father gave me was Elia's essays, hence my plate-motto, "Fair and wholesome pasturage." My father was most punctilious about our reading, and we were never allowed to borrow a book. Thew, of course, is my maiden name, or was. My husband, dead seventeen years, was the

son of a sea captain and came from Bangor, Me. (Isn't it odd how husbands and wives "cross country" to meet each other?)

We had one exquisite, beautiful, wonderful boy, who lived to be seven years old and then died of scarlet fever. In all my contemplation of children I have never seen just such a bright, rare boy. This prideful claim I hope you will pardon. Our doctor's wife—an Irish lady—told me that it was enough for one woman's life-time to have had a child like little Phil. This leads up to the statement that he would this day be twenty-nine years old; and his mother is now what dear, old, good, bad Henry James calls "an ancient contemplative person." You can figure out her dreadful age if you care to.

Which should remind you, that you have not yet told me how you feel about Mr. Henry James; iridescent Henry. We must have a long, long talk about him. Recently I have read "His Awkward Age," counted a bad book by some. But I count it, on the contrary, a wonderful missionary tract, a scathing arraignment of society in London.

I have not yet thanked you for calling my attention to "The Divine Fire." Thank you

heartfeltedly. I had been entertaining such an apathy, not to say disdain of modern fiction, that I might have missed this wonderful book, but for you. What an engaging style the author has. I was simply chained to the book until I had finished it; and what masterly architecture of plot. It seems to me the most marvellous presentation of love on a high plane—love as the Creator intended it—that has ever come before my eyes. The soul-evolution of Keith Rickman—with his final victory—gives one a satisfaction to muse over for days. How I wish every young man and woman in the land could read the story with true interpretation. It is meat for their elders, too, and shows them all life's blunders.

Yes, the Gradgrind came to the front, and I preserved my reputation by a tar-baby line of conduct—"not say'n nothin'." Serendippers, as we know, do not carry facts as a heavy-weight; a good easy time along the way being—I take it—their method of precedure. However, if really brought to the bar of justice, I did not give that Duchess a single thought, in her proper historical bearing. Kings and queens, to my mind, are unregener-

ated, unenlightened persons, and the sooner the world is done with them the better.

My "cakes and ale" this winter are a long curious chapter. My newspaper head lay down in the road and refused to go, so I have been using some other wits that happened to be left. But I have my meed of consolation in my friend Kate—all the Kates are for adventure. We were strolling home from a country visit one October evening, the brown hills and the sunset glow behind us—the moon coming up in front of us, and Kate bemoaned herself that she never could find any one that would go as far and stay as long as she wanted to stay. Like "Adam the blacksmith's man," I retorted: "Oh, say that sweet word again—I am for you; where do you want to go?"

Kate said: "Don't let's go home; let's go on out th' pike." The prospect allured, but we finally concluded to fare on home toward the town-lights. Several times since when we have met we have grieved that our hearts failed us. For well we know whom we would have found out th' pike; dear old Don Quixote and beloved Sancho Panza, Mumper's Dingle, of course, Lavengro and Isopel Berners, R. L. S., Kilmeny, Waring, The Scholar Gipsy,

Fotheringay with his pushcart, or was it a donkey-cart? and many other dear peoples of the real and ideal road.

Oh pardon this long run-away letter. I have "such a world of things I want to have you hear me say," as a Sarah friend of mine says.

I do hope you will soon feel stronger—it is the terrific interestingness of modern life that lays us all low. I think I am out of my wits more than half the time, but every one else seems too crazy to notice it. Now please do write me a great, long, egotistical, conceited letter, just like this. Yours faithfully,

R. B. Q.

I sent something recently to the *Century* and the editor said it was a noble idea for the *Atlantic*. I passed it on to the *Atlantic* and he said it was a fine paper for the *Century*.

THE UNBEKNOWNST BOOKSHOP,
POMONA, ISLE OF ORKNEYS.

MY DEAR JOSEPHINE:—

"Through the lucid chambers of the South
Looked out the joyous Spring, looked out and smiled."

Modern Letter-Writing

We used to have to parse James Thomson's "Seasons"—and I really grew up hating the sight of the book; but, oh, dear Josephine Gregory Dexter, the poems are pure gold—a mine of beauty; a book for the pocket everlastingly, for all along the road and all the year around. Listen to this:

> "For lofty sense,
> Creative fancy, and inspection keen
> Through the deep windings of the human heart
> Is not wild Shakespeare thine and Nature's boast?"

Now, isn't that a good dose of poetry for a bleak March morning? Really, it seems to me that the times would be reconstructed if everybody read some old poetry every day. I read that D'Annunzio said he had purified his ideals by reading poetry. Let us hope it is true; He belongs among the "Horrid Beasts of Literature."

All this seems far afield, doesn't it? Truly, I ought to be apologising for this flimsy notepaper. I must have bought it in the "dark o' the moon"—the financial moon, perhaps. Well, I was pleased to hear from you again, and I have not said hints because you have

been silent. One has to toil so hard for the "silver medals," that I am reasonable about friends who don't write; I only ask not to be forgotten.

Yes, coincidental sagacity was my phrase; "accidental sagacity" was the Great Abbot of Strawberry's definition of serendipity. It seems to me that *irrelevant relevance* really belongs in the definition, too, serendipity being a sort of o'erleaping insight—or long-distance deduction, as it were. Did you ever find out where the "Princes of Serendip" came from? Tom Moore writes of "Serendib's high crags"—Isles of Sumatra. . . .

Don't you wish we could draw big salaries for mousing around among the old books? The only old-book comrade I have, hereabouts, is a quaint little young-old man—or old-young man—about my age, clerk in a second-hand bookshop. We call him "Rare Old Bronson." He knows every old writer of the world nearly, and we love to hear him talk. He has six sets of Shakespeare. I could talk all day about him. Mr. —— went in one day and asked Mr. Bronson if there was any new poetry. "New poetry," sniffed Mr. Bronson, "how could there be any new

poetry; the poetry was all written long ago by Shakespeare, Milton, Keats, Dante, Shelley, and Byron."

You know how we have always heard talk of islands as resorts for the weary. I've been having some chaff with a Chicago friend about living for somewhile in an abandoned lighthouse on some lovely island of the sea. We toss news of the island back and forth to each other, and at last accounts our hermit cow had jumped over the cliff and paddled off to the mainland, while we were on the top floor pasting scrap-books. Do write me some news of your island; where is it and what do you do there? If you haven't one, come on ours; no books allowed; just Rational, Irrational Conversation.

"The Unbeknownst Bookshop," at the head of my letter, means that I have been selling out-of-print books and don't advertise at all—might have too much business. I have no shop, but "place" books by mail (and then again I don't).

It is a very droll and interesting little business.

I do hope you are well. Boston must be "hard on the brain," as an old negro said

of reading and writing. With best wishes, yours,

R. B. Q.

The following letter was written by a country shopkeeper with a Stevensonian vein and an inexhaustible capacity for "lending a hand."

SWAMPSCOTT, NEW HAMP.

DEAR SARAH:—

You are an old hero or heroess; do you know you showed most splendid courage. I think it takes more real bravery to go to a hospital than it does to go to war and I never shall forget you as you went into the elevator that morning. We hope and pray that you will get along finely and fully recover.

It has been very dull here, roads are bad and people stayed at home, but to-day things look brighter; two women drove up a little while ago and we hitched their horse for them to our post and then they went down to Beekman's and traded. Then a boy came in and brought back a stick of candy and wanted his money

back, said they had some up to Clyde's store that he liked better, and just now we sold three cents' worth of Lemon extract, but had to furnish a vial to put it in. There is a lady now looking at some hair pins; she says *perhaps* she will come back and get some. Have just sold a dozen eggs and a cake of chocolate that I know will not come back; for Alice and Mabel got them.

I write you about these things because I know you will be glad to hear that business is picking up.

. . . I have some new teeth for the lower part of my face; they are very pretty when I smile, but I am not going to smile much till you get well. It has been a great trouble to get used to them; they hurt my mouth so that I could only wear them a little while at a time, but I found that I had been using the wrong side up. Since I turned them over they are comparatively easy.

The girls are teasing to have me get some hair dye. Give my love to those two blessed good daughters of yours when you write.

THOMAS S. DILLON.

Modern Letter-Writing

To Wilma:

Do you see that little blue bird sitting in the Maple tree? He was sent to me by Mr. Philip Hale. I was undecided whether I'd get a blue bird or a song sparrow to take my message to you to-morrow at dawn, so I called up Mr. Hale and he said, "For Easter music I should advise the blue bird and I will send you the best one I know of." I have told the little fellow just what I want him to say to you in his song and he is practising now. I hope you will like his voice.

Some say his coat was cut out of the Southern skies, but I know for a fact that his song comes from the blue above, and the words of the song you will hear in the morning came from my heart.

Dorothea.

The next letter is also from Dorothea, who is playing the rôle of a woodchuck, while her friend Wilma is impersonating a rabbit.

Dear Rabbit:

I guess you'll wiggle your little nose harder than ever when I tell you that I am

going down into my hole away from the public for the rest of the winter. I am so tired of talking to every and any animal that comes along; that is where we woodchucks differ from you cotton-tails. You are such sociable little things. I am only coming up out of my burrow now and then to see you as often as Jack Frost will let me.

Will you come down to see me real often, Bunny? 'Tisn't every lady would keep company with a woodchuck. It is going to snow, so I must hibernate, but call me up any time. The number of my burrow is Chuck-527, ring two.

Goodnight,

THE WOODCHUCK.

MY DEAR WILMA:

Faded the pink—gone the friend. . . . Pause a moment while I give way to my grief by depositing a tiny tear upon this, my lacy handkerchief. . . . . I do not suffer alone, however; our Mary is displaying marked suicidal tendencies. A tidal wave from the northeast took off the head of the clothes reel as slick as ever Absit * removed yours.

* A name coined by Wilma for a woman of the dragon species.

Modern Letter-Writing

. . . Little Mabel Purdy has a steady. Yes, sir! George Dowell, all bedecked in grey tweeds—the trousers of the proper Harvard width—has sauntered over where sits our little shall or will Mabel resplendent in a skirt of bunting green. They have started for Poplar Hill, botanising probably; that is a science 'specially for lovers, says Elbert. How lucky is Mabel to have a steady. . . .

Lady Wilma, you are an expensive luxury. Didn't I just bribe Will with five cents to go to the postoffice for me? Our text this morning will be found in the Book of Lamentations, the last chapter and the last part of the last verse. And I say unto you the letter came not. The letter came not. It came not. My brethren, let us study this text together a little while this morning and see what lessons can be gathered from it. The letter came not. I dare say every last one of us here has met with disappointment of one sort or another, but how have we met it? how have we met the coming-not-of-the-letter? Have we sat around with a sickly smile of resignation upon our countenances, or, like Absit of old, have we proceeded to freeze our faces? It seems to me, my brethren, the latter is the wiser course. Freeze

your face, so your temper will be kept in cold storage. Keep your mercury well down whenever you come anywhere near tropical people. . . .

Enclosed you will find a cut of our osculation factory, as it will appear undergoing extensive repairs at the dentist's. Silver and gold will not be spared to make the place attractive to our customers. We expect to occupy the remodelled apartments about September first and we beg to announce that we intend to put out a little better article than ever before.

. . . . . Please come to me as soon as you can. Papa has had his beard trimmed unusually short and he looks so stern I am afraid to stay alone with him. I told him I was and he smiled.

Doctor says I must walk more. Maybe I'll be able to walk as far as Pinkerton Square. I shan't play if you come home without freckles. I can imagine you puffing off to sleep about now, so goodnight. I asked God to be good to you. You'll tell me if he isn't, won't you?

DOROTHEA.

Modern Letter-Writing

CONECREST, N. H.

MY DEARS:

With your gentle permission I shall use my machine, for the ink at hand wears a colour becoming to coffee but very trying to ink.

Behold me now in fair Conecrest, loveliest village of the lower New Hampshire hills, which at present are veiled in a dreamy Indian summer mist that makes one wish to go and dwell with Shawondasee.

Conecrest is rich in orchards, vines, and berries of all sorts and descriptions. The people with whom I am boarding are most kindly and interesting, and not two stones' throw away is a genial pine grove, whose pines are not so old that they chant too dolorously. In the grove is a tent, pitched by the young son of mine host. Said son is now away in school, and I intend to get permission to use the tent. Only think what a place to invoke heavenly harmonies that will be. To tell the truth, I am not yet enough rested from my trip and the wedding to catch even mundane harmonies. But all in good time I intend to woo some thinks and *hoffentlich,* a feel or two. Meantime, I am simply enjoying the blue and green beatitudes.

Modern Letter-Writing

Quite under the rose, I have a secondary purpose in coming here. I am prospecting for a good camping-place for next summer. I was to inspect a wild picturesque spot Monday, under the pilotage of a dealer in terra firmas (please let me make my plurals in my own way). But on consulting a map I find this beautiful campish region bounded on two sides by "Rattlesnake Hills." So I have called off explorations in that quarter. My Eden will be, preferably, snakeless. Yet what can compare with a woodchuck-haunted mountainside like the one where we pitched our tent? Nor let me forget our varied sportive, gambolling and philosophical visitors, among whom was your "little brother." I see him now,—

> What time, the evening shades prevail,
> Take up his heavy, well-filled pail
> And toil along the Milky Way,
> As daybeams turn to shadows grey.
> Though others paths of dalliance tread,
> The stony steeps for Bob and Fred. ! ! ! !

Whoa, Pegasus! You are scorching. All change for the plain, prosaic slopes of rhymeless fact. Which reminds me, have you, Elizabeth, harvested your proper income from

those poetical thistles of yours? If not, why not? You certainly had the genuine essence of poetry in that "fragment" you breathed upon the day we cavorted with the heathen nine. Don't let the ultra-critical attitude of any of your relatives restrain your fine frenzy, but take counsel of your own bosom and get in a corner with Euterpe (I think that's the lady), but in any case you know whom I mean, and take down whatever she dictates.

Speaking of fine frenzies, I must tell you of my first experience in a camp-meeting (Oh, yes! I did once go to a "Seventh Day" camp-meeting of a milder order). This one—a short distance from my boarding place—was conducted by Mr. Wallary, who was at least sincere, and consequently deserving of respect. After Mr. Wallary had sat down, volunteers entered the arena. One man arose and testified that at first he had tried to "pray by himself on the quiet." "But I didn't get nothing," was the somewhat startling conclusion. Considering the biblical injunction in support of prayers "on the quiet" it seemed to me somewhat unorthodox. But everything depends on the point of view.

Modern Letter-Writing

I hope, Alice, that you had a most enjoyable and profitable sojourn in the Retreat with Bishop Hall to mellow the atmosphere. You will understand why I thought a retreat would do me good. Pines are nearly as good as Bishops sometimes.

I am sending you two vases of my latest draughts of Helicon water—offered only to the elect electorum of my friends. But when you quaff them, I make no doubt you will discover that they are ninety-nine parts common rain-water to one part Helicon aqua pura.

I shall remember most pleasantly our sojourn in campdom and the gracious hospitality tendered me by all of you. The memory of those sunsets and the whole setting—ours and the sun's—and the cosmic oneness we felt will never fade from my memory. In the language of class meetings it was "a blessed experience."

Yours ever so much and always,

JOSEPHINE G. D.

MY DEAR LUCIFER:—

Your last letter made me chuckle so much that I forgave you as I went along for being such a "sassy" child. For you are—especially in your attitude towards New England,

Women, and the Maker of the Universe. (The order ought to please you.)

Yes, I dare say there'll be "ginger-snaps" for tired climbers of the Aurelian Way; but I'm not so certain about the lectures, so I am putting in a few now. There are about two hundred and ninety-nine things I want to say to you, but I shan't try to say them all now. Right here, though, I am minded to utter a protest at your libellous charges against "New England love-cant." No honest, right-minded man or woman could or should deny the sensuous element in love, or be afraid or ashamed to admit it, or consider it less divine than any other phase of it. For that reason, I object to your figure that "it stands knee-deep in the earth." It stands there only because of a strangely perverted habit of so viewing it through the squinting centuries.

But to declare that the sensuous element is all there is to it—in this age—is to confess one's self mediæval, nay, almost aboriginal in his view of the matter. What! does everything else in the universe evolve and take on a thousand finer forms and graces, and love alone stand where it stood when the first savage lassoed his mate? "Poh!" to use your favourite

ejaculation, one might as well write the romance of a chimpanzee as—well—yours.

You admit that there may be spiritual fire between thinker and thinker, but not between men and women. In other words, women cannot think! *Me Hercule!* when I remember the million and one vacuities that I have heard from the lips of men who were brothers to the ox, and when I count up the number of women I have known whose minds were porous to sweetness and light, I can account for your audacity only on the supposition that your ancestors were born in some country where women are yoked with dogs and made to pull the plough—the progressive land that coloured Schopenhauer's lurid notions of women.*

Now I am not less frank than yourself, and I tell you straightly that there are women who would be as unmoved by any physical charm or grace a man might possess as though he were a tobacco Indian, *if* he could not first, by his mind, heart, and character light that same "spiritual fire" in them. I am not theorising; I know this.

Browning said "Flesh helps spirit as much as spirit helps flesh," and the latter half of his statement has a subtle psychological meaning

overlooked by those who are struck by the more novel side of the proposition.

However, I am glad to observe that on two points at least, we are in perfect accord; namely, —— —— dealer in literary whey, and the word "literary." It was only last week that I spent an ineffectual quarter of an hour trying to explain to some one why the misuse of the word "literary" rasped my nerves. It is a word that is all things to all men and a few more to women.

Lots of people wouldn't know any better than to call you literary. As a matter of fact the reason why I have liked your stuff (the term is purely technical) is because it has the vigour of form which comes only from molten thought and feeling, something the mere littérateur never attains. In other words, you write straight out from the shoulder, as the mere word-picker cannot. The difference is the difference in capacity to feel.

I hope you didn't imagine I thought of heaven or hell other than as subjective states? But the words are good to keep for rhetorical purposes and to mark the progress of mankind.

No, monsieur; suicide is undignified, bad manners—"going where you aren't invited," as

a witty man once put it. It's throwing up your hand before the game is through, and altogether contrary to that fine code of the Japanese, "Bushido." In few, it isn't game. One shouldn't let on that he doesn't like his hand, but stick it out like a man.

One shouldn't "chew his pills," either. That's why I don't like the way you harp on the cracks in the universe. Bless your heart, don't you think I've always seen the cracks too?

The rebellious Lucifer attitude of mind is necessarily discordant, and the psychologist has proved in the laboratory that all discordant thought, fear, hate, grief, worry, or any kindred emotion generates a poison that wastes the physical as well as the moral health. That's another reason why a philosopher should be "carm" about the cracks in the universe. There are ninety-nine others. "A cucumber is bitter, throw it away," said Marcus A.; and our own Marcus of Concord said the same when he quoted as a good life-maxim the counsel of our mothers: "Children, eat your victuals and say no more of it."

In closing these solemn ceremonies, it occurs to me to remark, apropos of the godlike reason resident in *all men,* that intuition is a feat of

the subliminal self, the higher logic of reason; as the lightning-flash computation of a skilful mathematician, by its rapidity of process hides its own intellectual links, so intuition, in one quick flash-light of discovery does not reveal the assistance it has had from a dozen faculties which are not supposed to enter into its composition.

Sincerely,

J. B. K.

* To be strictly honest, I think men are, on the whole, much the superior of women in disposition and character.

My dear Lucifer:

I wish I knew which one of you would read this letter, as it might make a difference how I should write it. But it is really addressed to the man who wrote the next to the last letter I had from you. He was a reasonable, human kind of a being, not impervious to the claims of justice. *Mais, cet autre! je m'y perds!*

Sanity—with which you charge me—is, after all, not incompatible with intelligence a degree or so removed from mediocrity, though

your comments have not that connotation. You say life exists only for the production of the individual, and then you challenge me to renounce my own individuality and espouse your disbeliefs, in asking me to repeat a gruesome midnight formula. But tell me, isn't it as unjust and illogical to upbraid one because she cannot deny something, as it is to upbraid one because he cannot affirm something? My position—as I told you—lies between belief and disbelief. If it lay anywhere else I should say so with equal candour. To me it requires quite as much credulity—as well as some other qualities which I shall not specify—to deny something of which we know nothing, as to affirm something of the same subject. I sometimes wonder just where you get the outlines of the being whom you use as a kind of rhetorical punching-bag. Is he the only god you have, and if so, would you mind telling me what the particular fulcrum of your religious existence is? also, its use, as well as the use of the glorious insanity, which you extol. ("*'Tis mirth that keeps us sane.*" To what end then?)

I don't capitulate, moreover, to a lot of foreign names. In one of your former treatises,

oh, most precocious one, you mentioned the name of Vivekananda among the Great Ones. I had bought "Karma Yoga" some three years ago and read it carefully, only to find that with the exception of two good short sentences which he may have purloined for aught I know —there was absolutely nothing in the book that had not been said fifty times before with more pungency. So I gave away my copy, to some one who might possibly like a book with Vivekananda's name on it.

When you said you loved Christ because he was such "a good hater," I was struck again with the repetition of the same standpoint from which you judge God, the universe, and love. You pick out *one aspect,* and ignore the others: "the everlasting no," but discard its mate. Capacity to hate always implies capacity to love, and Christ illustrated the fact as no other man has. But you dwell upon one side of him and pick out a similar side of the God whom you postulate, and the emotion which you misname "love." Your poem on that subject might stand as a masterly thing, if you had only written the right word over it. . . .

I, too, copied your poems,—not all of them;

the one I returned I did not wish to keep, though you should not rashly infer that I did not and could not understand or sympathise with the mood back of it. . .

I am sure you will see that I have not been blind to your intellectual or spiritual dimensions. But sometimes, it seems to me that you don't occupy all the rooms in your palace. In any case, I don't believe too much introspection—or contemplation of one's destiny—is good either for the contemplator or for the destiny.

And, *please,* do not say things which "are not." *Par exemple,* you say "No woman can deny." Do you know all women? Has the mind sex? Do not sons continually inherit from the mother and daughters from the father, to the end of the chapter? I can deny anything that the truth or reason bids me deny. But not on the authority of another. I *deny that,* as a ground of denial. Secondly: you say that "sanity never did anything for this being man." Not so, mine frent; what about Emerson, Shakespeare, Marcus Aurelius, Lessing, and hundreds of others, whose sanity was one of the most conspicuous of their qualities, or rather the very warp of all their reason-

ing and philosophy. I hear you putting up the receiver and so,

Sincerely,

J. B. K.

BOSTON, Nov. 7, 1906.

MY DEAR LUCIFER:

Your last letter had more of your real self in it than any of your others, consequently I liked it better than any other. . .

Eh, bien, you shall not exterminate the "whole Me,"—only so much, please, as interferes with a harmonious adjustment with the universe. I was about to tell you that it seemed to me that you made your mistake in going to extremes, and quote you the Emersonian principle, "if you wish to be loved, love measure." But inasmuch as you acknowledge that tendency in yourself, I have no disposition to "rub it in," though there is yet something along that line that I have wished to say to you. Don't you think that you will antagonise even some of your best potential readers by some of your outbursts which might be called—*pardonnez*—rantings? Of course, it doesn't matter so much what you say to me, for I have understood that something had "taken the savour"

from your mouth, and so understanding, I understood. But when you launch upon the uninitiated public such statements as you made about the Almighty, you are sure to alienate your audience before you can get them to hear the really fine things you have to say. I don't want you to do this, for my instinct assures me that you can do things very much worth while.

Your screed on "What's the Use?" calls for a word or two of rejoinder. The only objection to the glorious and exhilarating doctrine of futility lies in a one-sided statement of it,—a reiteration of its negative side only. The Everlasting Nay in the universe is eternally paired with an Everlasting Yea. The very fact that the soul of man perceives the futility of most things is a sure token that there is something that is not futile—subtly recognised by his spirit—for which he reaches out. This you practically admit, you turbulent son of paradox, when you say that blank atheism and irreligion would follow when you no longer ask, "What's the Use?"

Certainly, if you could also say what's the use? of God and religion; what would be the use in saying what's the use to keep you from blank atheism and irreligion? But—and here

is where one can puncture your logical tire—if all these terrestrial nots and what-nots of the daily mirage of life, by the silent emphasis of their own futility, in the end drive man to something which is not futile, as you have implied, even the poor futilities have justified their existence and are therefore not wholly futile. Q. E. D.

From this point of view, What's the use can be made a spur to endless attainment and not a cold shove into the dismal swamps of despair.

Once again, it seems to me not quite courteous—not to say "game"—to express too much disgruntlement at the universe and its Ruler and Maker. We are here as his guests, and though we must admit that sometimes the entertainment (as, for example, in the recent tragedy at San Francisco) is not what we should have liked to buy tickets for, had we had a synopsis of the play, nevertheless we must take it with god-like calm, awaiting a final issue that may explain the most inscrutable prelude that we are doomed to witness with the eyes of mere humans. I long ago gave up the problem of reconciling omnipotence with an all-loving and beneficent Deity. I found it very convenient in my quandary to have a devil to "blame

things onto,"—not, perhaps, the black-hornèd creature of orthodox tradition, but some kind of a scape-goat to relieve the tension of reason when it can hold out no longer. The vital creed for me was very nearly stated by Marcus Aurelius, when he advised people to keep their minds and hearts so that they could fearlessly stand and deliver their contents, whenever any one chose to ask what was doing in those apartments (I am conscious that I am falling off from the dignity of the original statement, but I trust that you will understand that I am none the less serious in my endorsement of this kind of a life-standard).

You said you hoped I did not "take Unitarianism seriously." Having read —— ——, you must have made the interlinear discovery that I am not tethered by any ism. That is why I attend the Unitarian Church. They allow perfect freedom of mental thoroughfare, practically coinciding with agnosticism, which seems to me the only sane and modest attitude one can take. I don't at all agree with you that their faith is a compromise. And as for persecution, no denomination has had to take more of it. The great fact that appeals to me in their

religion is that they turn out men of character, or men of character, of clear brain and strong warm hearts are always found in that denomination. Dr. Crothers—he of "The Gentle Reader"—is one of the greatest preachers I have ever heard. I am not beyond needing "a mental and moral nudge," and one can always get it in Dr. Crothers's sermons. I know how you feel about sermons. I feel the same way about almost all of them. But there are a few, only a few, shining exceptions that save the day. Only three clergymen have come my way, or I theirs—whom I would care to spend much Sunday time with—Dr. Crothers, Dr. Parkhurst, and Dr. Ames.

You see what you have brought upon yourself by your fearful scourgings of my prophets. And your poems!!!! will bring still more, later; but another sheet would not hold my thinks on them and I have limited myself to this page, now that I see that it is number four. But I cannot refrain from saying right here that one of those things—at least—is real poetry. As for the others, *un autre jour*. No, though; I can't wait to tell you that I think you have no right to pen such an atrocious thing as the last line of the one I return.

Please burn this and write something worthy of your best self. It should be fine, but this thing is not. I do not mean that it has not finely strong and poetic lines—you could not help that. . .

I know Emerson said that there was a crack in everything that God made; but he didn't sit down and howl about that crack for days and months and years, oblivious to all the parts that weren't cracked. Extremes, again, you see.

And what an epithet you apply to the regions that produced R.W.E., Thoreau, Hawthorne *et hoc genus!* A geographical red line, Monsieur, does not mark the boundary between Philistia and the land of Sweetness and Light.

Forgive this preachment; 'tis kindly meant and from a friendly hand, as you must surely feel. Sincerely,

J. B. K.

The reader will please remember that all these letters are genuine, written only for their recipients, and that they all passed through the mails before appearing here.

The moment a letter is written with the remotest idea of possible publication, its unique charm as a letter is marred if not wholly lost. Neither will any attempt on the part of the writer to disguise a double aim in his correspondence escape the astute reader. For the result is inevitably a literary duplicate of a photograph of some one who is "trying to look natural"—a feat as impossible as lifting one's self by his bootstraps.

Or, to put the matter still more strongly, there is the same difference between a real and an artificial letter that exists between a real closet prayer and "the finest prayer ever addressed to a Boston audience."

The real letter is never the composition of its writer alone, but sometimes owes half its felicity, or infelicity, to the recipient who elicits it, on the same principle which underlies the blossoming of a flower that unfolds under the genial encouragement of its ce-

lestial correspondent ninety-odd million miles away.

The best letter-writer the world has ever known would suffer epistolary paralysis were he condemned to write only to Hiram Dubbs, the butcher. So, in a greater or less degree, every man's letters are conditioned, as none of his other writing can be, by the varying degrees of receptivity of the man or woman to whom they are addressed.

OUR COMÉDIE HUMAINE

THE colossal absurdity of that old query, "Has America really any literature?" affects a rational mind much as would the question, Are there any stars in the sky when a blind man looks for them?

This comparison drifted into my musings when I chanced to be preparing a list of American short-story writers for a friend who was making a collection in that line. When the list was completed, I found my previous high opinion of American literature indefinitely strengthened. For one can easily enumerate, offhand, thirty or forty authors of volumes of exceedingly fine stories, and after sleeping on the list and turning a few of memory's switch-keys, for more light, thirty or forty other writers of

down-right good stories may be added to the roll already called.

After making this discovery, the conclusion was inevitable that the number could easily be extended to more than a hundred by a little library research. Nor was this hope returned unto me void. Plenty of eligible authors were found, after discarding ineligibles, to bring the number well past a hundred and yet leave a pleasant margin of faith that there might be still others—blushing unseen—unintentionally overlooked by a library conditioned by human limitations.

Of course, some one will say "impossible!" Some one always does. It is much easier than to make an investigation. But "impossible" is a word which should be reserved till all the evidence is in. A fair way to test the evidence in this case would be to make a thorough study of the first twenty authors listed at the end of this paper. I stipulate only twenty, believing

that the interest and enthusiasm aroused by those twenty will be sure to stimulate to an investigation far into the forties and fifties, if not farther. At least, I should expect that to be the natural result except in cases where the investigator is the kind that can become so enamoured of a Greek particle that he will pursue it more years than Jacob did Rachel, wholly oblivious of the living pulsing charms of his own country's literature.

Unfortunately, the short story has had to combat an army of prejudices, whose commander-in-chief is the theory that real literary value is the exclusive property of works that are long and laborious, both for the writer and the reader. Yet Emerson has told us that nothing is of less importance on account of its being small.

As a matter of fact, the salient difference between a short story and a long novel is frequently the difference between a small

diamond and a large lump of coal; or the difference between a clump of clover and a bale of hay. The parable of The Prodigal Son might easily have been expanded to a three-volume novel, but its literary and ethical value would have been diminished directly as the volume.

If America had produced nothing but her short stories, her achievement might well command respect and admiration, and forever settle the oafish question whether she has a literature or not.

In estimating the value of our short stories, one should not forget the very wide territory which their varied treatment covers. Every section of America and all her heterogeneous population are mirrored in this department of her literature. White men, black men, red men, emigrants from every clime, half-breeds, rich men, poor men, beggar men, thieves, lawyers, physicians, clergymen, artists, musicians, merchants,

clerks, soldiers, miners, cowboys, snobs, grafters, cowards, heroes, grey-beards, children, and animals,—dwellers on the mountains, hillsides, plains, in the valleys, by the river, lake, and sea; those that stifle in the tenements, or in the Smart Set,—an endless procession they pass before us, clad in the gaudy robes of comedy, or the black and drab raiment of tragedy.

In a word, our short stories are our "Comédie Humaine"—invested with the incomparable diversity which only a multifarious authorship can give. So the foreigner who is asking what is truly American will find his question more fully and accurately answered in our Comédie Humaine than in any other department of our literature. But he will find the answer to his question cannot be covered by any single adjective, any more than a single adjective can be made to cover the scope of American stories.

For this same reason it is a very difficult

matter to determine the relative rank—*inter se*—of our short-story writers. A father with five or even ten children might possibly have some unconfessed scale of good, better, and best by which he unavoidably classified them in his most intimate admissions to justice. But it is doubtful whether Priam, with his fifty sons, could ever make more than a rough tentative estimate of the comparative virtues and vices of his patriarchal family. On the usual lists of ten—which seems to be a sacred number with those who call literary rolls—Poe is generally assigned a very high rank, partly because of the glamour of his poetical reputation, and partly because his fame as a storyteller is of longer standing than that of many whose work is much better than his. To dispel a little of the popular fog which envelops this subject, let us think of two stones of unequal size. We will suppose that the smaller one

begins rolling down a snowy hill—which for our purpose may be of indefinite length, —and the next day let the other stone begin rolling down its hill, also of indefinite length. At the end of the third day any casual observer who sees the two stones can tell you how much bigger number one is than number two. But he is not likely to add or know that the nucleus of the second ball was larger than its rival. Equally misleading are some of the surface increments of fame gathered by rolling down the hills of time.

However masterly the technique of Poe's stories, many of them—notably the "Black Cat" and "The Murders of the Rue Morgue" —are marred by the revolting nature of the subject-matter. In any case, Poe's stories have received their full meed of appreciation. But there are scores of others of which this is not true. The author whose name I should place first on our honour roll is Mrs. Edith Wharton, whose short stories, pub-

lished under the title, "The Greater Inclination," exhibit a delicacy of thought and feeling and a classic finish of style that has not been matched by any other writer of her class. The closest rivals of this volume, like the other foot that rivalled Trilby's, are "Crucial Instances" and "The Descent of Man" by the same author.

In Mrs. Wharton's case, as in Kipling's, the tardy emphasis of popular approval falls not on the author's best book, but on a much later one whose circulation is stimulated by the acquired velocity of fame. "The House of Mirth" is a finely dramatic book, but nowhere reveals the masterly touches everywhere evident in "The Greater Inclination."

In writing Mrs. Mary Wilkins Freeman's name second one almost wishes there could be two firsts, or another occult number between one and two, so reluctantly does one write that author's name anywhere but first. As Mrs. Freeman has worn her well-earned

aureola so long, it would be presumptuous to do more than call her name as we pass to our third, Henry James, whose fame compels one to a similar brevity of treatment. Although Mr. James is not usually remembered as a writer of short stories, some of his finest work has been done in that line.

One feels once more the inadequacy of numerals at the mention of Hawthorne's name, which has been so clothed upon with the shimmering garments of glory that the first impulse of most critics would, I think, make them write his name first on the list. But after reading Hawthorne's stories alongside of those in "The Greater Inclination," I hardly see how one can put him before Mrs. Wharton.

The position assigned the name of Gertrude Hall will undoubtedly be challenged by everybody who has not read her exquisite tales, "Far from To-day," and endorsed by

most people who have. As this book happens to be one which should be far more widely known than it is, it may not be amiss to say a few more words about it. As the title indicates, the stories in "Far from To-day" have not only in their subject-matter but in their style of treatment a classic aloofness that reminds one of the distinction of reticence which marks the essays of Mrs. Meynell. But the English writer diffuses so little warmth into her writing that one fancies it done by the light of a wax candle in a silver candlestick and the author using a pearl-handled penholder. But under the Vere de Vere exterior of Miss Hall's work one is distinctly conscious of strong, warm heartbeats that give a sympathetic vitality to every story she has written. Above all, the psychical atmosphere of Miss Hall's stories is finely oxygenised, for all her scenes are laid in the land of the spirit, where the heavenly trade-winds blow. Ele-

vation is, perhaps, the one word which most clearly conveys the distinguishing quality of Miss Hall's work; and as one would naturally expect, that quality so perfectly controls the verbal incarnation of her style that each sentence, word, and syllable is garmented with regal simplicity.

Coming to our sixth author, Mr. James Lane Allen, I find myself with almost as strong a preference for the wonderfully fine stories, "Flute and Violin," "The Kentucky Cardinal," and "Aftermath," over the author's other works, good as they are, as I do for the "Greater Inclination" over any other member of Mrs. Wharton's literary family. This is another case, too, where I think the apparent emphasis of popular approval—as indicated by the sales of Mr. Allen's books—has not fallen upon the best work he has done.

To facilitate the ranking of the next fifteen or twenty names it would be convenient

to have fifteen, or twenty, sevens. It is obvious that the longer one counts the more difficult it becomes to balance the delicate scales of appreciation. Firstness and secondness may be guessed at with considerable intrepidity. We are comfortably sure that Shakespeare should stand first on any list of authors. But when one attempts to take the elusive dimensions of seventh-ness, eleventh-ness, nineteenth-ness, and twenty-ninth-ness, and all other esses that lie between, he becomes involved in a problem as impossible of solution as how many times are two buttercups contained in three daisies; or three violets in one rose; or what is the least cosmic multiple of a cloud and a rainbow.

With humble acknowledgment, therefore, of human limitations, I shall continue the list from this point, on a purely tentative basis, whose arrangements may be changed by anybody who has mastered the literary mathe-

matics of the incommensurable. On the list here given the fact that a name stands in the thirties or forties will signify chiefly that it had to stand somewhere. On the other hand, I have tried to push my best men to the front as long as the front would last.

Of recent short-story writers, whose pens are still active, John Luther Long, Jack London, and O. Henry deserve especial mention. In a single classic story, "Madame Butterfly," Mr. Long showed himself a master-performer on the strings of pathos and humour. In nearly every other tale which he has since published, one finds the same dominant qualities—a delicately keen perception of the hidden tragedies and comedies of life and a tenderly sympathetic touch in transcribing them to the pages of literature.

The same strong mastery of his subject and its possibilities, which marks the stories of Mr. Long is equally apparent in the work

of Jack London, who brings to his art the fresh charm of the almost virgin background of the frozen north. Mr. London's style is tense, dramatic, and clear-cut; or, to get closer to the root of the matter, he possesses, in common with Mr. Long, the deeper capacity of seeing and feeling, which is the sixth sense of genius and the informing spirit of the best kind of style.

Another author whose work is not shamed by comparison with Stockton's or Bret Harte's is Mr. Porter, or O. Henry, as he prefers to write himself in letterdom. Quaint, original, and vigorous in theme and treatment the stories of O. Henry are, nevertheless, subtoned by a fine, wholesome sentiment (suggesting Mark Twain), obvious to any one who will take soundings below the rippling surface of the tales themselves. The tale of "The Tempered Wind" gives the author at his best.

A close literary kin of O. Henry is Forbes

Heermans, whose crisp, humourous, and pathetic stories of the far West have a captivating verve and piquancy all their own. In fact, Mr. Heermans's book, "Thirteen," should be numbered among our classics, where it has few superiors.

A double literary cousin of Mr. Heermans and Mr. William John Hopkins is Mr. Gelett Burgess, whose latest book, "A Little Sister of Destiny," is so delicately humourous and tender and so whimsically charming that we shall make a great mistake to forget this volume when we number up our literary jewels. "A Little Sister of Destiny" is a series of fairy tales for grown-ups; and fairy tales lit up by those subtle flashes of intuition which oftentimes give more illumination on the problems of character and conduct than tomes of ponderous meditations lighted by so-called pure reason.

As nearly every one would answer present

if one were to call the roll of readers of Dr. Hale's books, nothing more need be said about them; but two of his fellow-clergymen on our list have written stories whose charms have been slightly obscured by time and chance, which Ecclesiastes says "happeneth to them all." Our parents chuckled and wept over the whilom Reverend Adirondack Murray's tales, especially the story of "John Norton's Christmas." But many well-read people of our generation know nothing of them and it is time for a Murray renaissance. The other clergyman, Mr. Bradley Gilman, whose stories of "The Parsonage Porch" have hardly won their proper share of attention from the much distracted public eye, has done such fine work, particularly in the tale of "The Misunderstood Dog," that we cannot afford to let this volume pass into the limbo of the forgotten.

Another short-story writer, recently deceased, whose fame is sure of ever-widening

circles, is Rowland Robinson, well known to most literary people of Vermont. But the reader who studies him for the first time should be warned to begin with the right volume, as Mr. Robinson's stories are of very unequal merit. "Uncle 'Lisha's Outing" and "Danvis Folks" give the author's rarest manner, which at its best is as uniquely fine as the flavour of the maple sugar of the author's own native State. No one who has ever met Mr. Robinson's star character, Antoine Bassett, can fail to acknowledge the unforgetable charm of his character, philosophy, and dialect.

After reading these tales, if one would journey to the very antipodes of Mr. Robinson's backgrounds, let him read Mr. Edgar Fawcett's "Social Silhouettes," a keenly fascinating study of New York society, written with the fine psychological discrimination which marks the works of Mrs. Wharton and Mr. Henry James.

Our Comédie Humaine

Several of the authors here considered are generally remembered as writers of novels only. Probably more than half of the readers of Maurice Thompson have him pigeonholed in their memories as the author of "Alice of Old Vincennes." But his finest work, nevertheless, was done in short stories like "A Pair of Old Boys," which is much more deservedly a classic than half that are catalogued under that term. The same is true of that exquisitely tender little story, "Her Letter to His Second Wife," by Professor Brander Matthews, which, *me judice,* is the literary Joseph to whom all the rest of Professor Matthews's literary family should do obeisance.

Even the apparently complete roll-call of contributors to our Comédie Humaine given at the end of this review, by no means includes our most recent writers of good short stories. Sometimes an author, perhaps inspired by a glance at a real life-tragedy,

writes a single masterly story that permanently brands its outlines upon the memory of its reader. Such a tale was "Her Majesty," by Marion Manville Pope, published in *Harper's* a few years ago. Tense and dramatic, with a classic nobility of feeling and diction, this story deserves the finest bibliographical incarnation that the binder can give it, and should be known as one of the very best of the contributions to our Comédie Humaine.

"The Eyes of Affection," by Mr. George Hibbard, is another single story that stands out against the drab of average memories.

A final retrospect at our large family of short-story writers, compels yet another word of appreciation. Despite their infinite variety, in the thousands of stories here represented, you will find almost nothing that is not clean and wholesome. This, I am glad to believe, is one of our national distinctions

and one which I hope we shall never barter even to escape the wholly unmerited charge of being "bourgeois."

No attempt has been made here to give more than one title or two of a representative volume of each author. For some of our Scheherazades — like Stockton — have written ten or more volumes of short stories and many others can claim a good half-dozen volumes apiece.

In conclusion, I cannot refrain from recommending to all those suffering from ennui, in its conjugal, bacheloric, spinsterial, or undiagnosed forms, to take a mellowing course (with alternate readings of essays and history) in the pleasant and profitable electives of our Comédie Humaine. When the evenings grow long and the repetitious character of existence makes its unwelcome home-thrust—as it sometimes will in the most carefully patrolled circles,—one has only to reach out a hand for a free literary

pass to the far mining regions of the West, with Mr. Forbes Heermans as guide; or to the Maine coast, under the pilotage of Mr. Noah Brooks; or to the Sunny South, with Mr. James Lane Allen, Mr. Thomas Nelson Page, or Mrs. Ruth McEnery Stuart—the princes and princess of entertainers;—or to the snow-shrouded regions of the Klondike, with Jack London.

Or, if one prefers to travel the unbounded, crepuscular realms of the soul, let him wander with the "Questionable Shapes," wanded into existence by Mr. Howells or Mr. Francis Millet, or tread the psychologically Debatable Lands of "The Little Less and More," with Mrs. Wharton, Mr. James, or Mr. Edgar Fawcett. Then, if one is tired of the companionship of adults, perplexed with the inscrutable problems of the universe, he may find recreation in the most delightful companionship of the children that gladden the pages of those fascinating books, "The

Madness of Phillip," "Whilomville Stories," and "The Cat and the Cherub."

In addition to all the entertainment of which the reader is certain, he will get more diverse and vital information concerning America—geographical, historical, and sociological—than from any other source of which I know. He will learn how a hundred different kinds of Americans think, speak, feel, love, hate, live, and die; and incidentally, he will get many a valuable lesson in courage, patience, sympathy, and heroism.

OUR COMÉDIE HUMAINE

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